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Anholt, R. (2017). *Governing humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises, and (in)security through resilience*. Dept. of Political Science and Public Administration.

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# Governing Humanitarian Emergencies, Protracted Crises, and (In)Security through Resilience

Rosanne Anholt



Cover photo by UN Photo/Isaac Billy. Contingent of Nepalese Peacekeepers Arrives in Juba from Haiti.



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## Acknowledgements

I would first of all like to thank my colleague and supervisor Wolfgang Wagner. I am grateful for your willingness to undertake this project with me, without which I would not be where I am now. Thank you for your relentless support throughout this project and beyond. Your confidence in my abilities have had a profound, positive effect on my self-confidence. I am looking forward to continue working with you on this project!

Special thanks also to Kees Boersma for your guidance, expertise, and enthusiasm! Your consistent suggestions for interesting theoretical approaches, books, and events have made this journey not only interesting, but also, and decidedly, fun. I have the greatest appreciation for your willingness to continue working on this project with me!

I would like to extend my thanks to Joris Rijbroek and the theme leaders of the Institute for Societal Resilience at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, for providing the financial means to carry out this project during the months April-August 2016. A very special thanks to ISR secretary Jeannetta van Baarsen for your undivided support (thank you mum!).

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Amsterdam Centre for Contemporary European Studies, ACCESS EUROPE, for providing the financial means to organise the seminar, ‘Governing (In)Security Through Resilience’ held on 29 June 2016. The event provided a great opportunity to exchange many interesting viewpoints and experiences.

A great thank you to the conference speakers, Joris Rijbroek, Kees Boersma, Wolfgang Wagner, and, in particular, Mark Duffield and Yamen Hrekes for your willingness to travel to the Netherlands and contribute your international perspectives and insightful experiences to this work. An additional and special thanks to Yamen, for your uncompromised love and support.

Last but most definitely not least, I want to sincerely thank my interviewees for their willingness to dedicate their time to this project, and talk about their work openly and sincerely. To me, resilience has come alive through your stories of the challenges that humanitarians and development actors face in working in the world’s most troubled places. Without your invaluable contribution this project would not have been possible.

‘Resilience’ occupies a prominent place in contemporary discussions around the governance of humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and insecurity more broadly. The aim of this study was to further our understanding of resilience as a governance rationality and a policy discourse, in particular with regards to the gap between scholars’ critique and resilience’s rapid uptake in practitioner circles. The academic debates on resilience within a variety of disciplines were reviewed, combined with 13 key informant interviews with resilience experts from a range of international development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding organisations at the governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental level. The results indicate that resilience is first and foremost a response to a radically different understanding of contemporary risks and crises as inevitable and complex. Practitioners add that resilience is also a response to the current structures of the international system that are ill-fitted to address the needs that arise out of contemporary protracted crises. While scholars point towards resilience’s dynamics of decentralization and responsabilisation that mirror neoliberal logics, practitioners point to the reverse: smarter programming that (problematically) necessitates joint-up efforts between humanitarian action and development assistance. There is nevertheless a common concern about resilience’s potential for depoliticisation, rendering invisible the structural factors that limit individuals’ agency and that (partly) define their vulnerabilities. In conclusion, resilience is an unfinished concept that refers to a certain interpretation of the world that designates a normative construction of how insecurity should be governed. Within a broader context of the ‘turn to complexity’, resilience ultimately seems to be about adaptation within the system, rather than system change. If resilience is to fulfil its potential to be a driver for effective, appropriate and acceptable programmes for peoples affected by violent insecurity, we should start by responsabilising deeper social structures, rather than individuals, for our common vulnerabilities.



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The rise of resilience as a policy concept

Since the turn of the decade, ‘resilience’ has been *the* governance rationality for international inter-, non-, and governmental organisations’ response to contemporary protracted crises – fragile contexts characterised by long-term political instability, (episodes of) violent conflict, and vulnerability of the lives and livelihoods of the population (Macrae & Harmer, 2004, p. 15).

Some prominent examples of humanitarian policies in which the concept of resilience has been used extensively include the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) *Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020*, and consortium efforts like the *Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2016-2017* (‘3RP’), which brings together no less than 200 partners including national governments, United Nations (UN) agencies, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in an appeal of more than 5.7 billion US dollars. Likewise, the first of its kind World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 hosted resilience as a major theme, and resilience constitutes a *leitmotif* for the EU’s *Global Strategy* (Wagner & Anholt, 2016).

As a working definition, resilience can be understood as a characteristic of systems, structures, organisations, communities, individuals, materials or biological organisms’ responses to crisis, characterised by the ability to absorb the shock, adapt to the new reality, and transform in order to function either as before the crisis, or in a superior manner (see for example Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013; Lorenz, 2013). It resonates with kindred terms such as adaptability, bouncing back, preparedness, self-protection, ‘building back better’, participation, engagement, and (local) ownership.

Despite its rapid and widespread uptake in (international) policies, ‘resilience’ is still a concept “*in the making* [emphasis in original]” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 13), illustrated by the lack of agreed-upon definitions and approaches. This is demonstrated also in the European Commission’s report *Resilience in Practice: Saving lives and improving livelihoods*, which outlines various NGOs’ different understandings of what resilience is and what a resilience-based approach to protracted crises (should) entail(s). This however, is a technical discussion at the policy and implementation level, which



seems to neglect a critical exploration of whether and why resilience *should* be the governance rationality of choice for protracted crises response, and what the concept actually ‘does’ in practice.

## **1.2 Academic engagement with resilience**

Unlike in the policy arena, resilience has interested scholars for almost half a century. The concept originally hails from the field of engineering, after which it was picked up in rapid fashion by other disciplines, including ecology and biology, psychology and psychiatry, as well as interdisciplinary fields, where it represents a successful outcome of the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments – e.g., socio-ecological adaptation, disaster preparedness (see for example Walker & Cooper, 2011).

As a characteristic of systems however, the term ‘resilience’ is often attributed to Holling’s work on systems ecology in the 1970s, in which resilience is defined as “the ability of a system to maintain its structure and patterns of behaviour in the face of disturbance” (Holling, 1986, quoted in Frerks, Warner & Weijs, 2011). Similarly influential was the work of his contemporary, economist Friedrich Hayek, who worked on complex systems, in which resilience featured as a model for financial risk management (Walker & Cooper, 2011). Often neglected is the work of risk scholar Wildavsky, who argued for managing risk through trial and error rather than precaution: “Resilience is the capacity to cope with unanticipated dangers after they have become manifest, learning to bounce back ... Are risks better managed, we may ask, by trying to anticipate and prevent bad outcomes before they occur, or by trying to mitigate such effects after they have shown up?” (Wildavsky, 1988, p. 77)

Only recently, scholars from a variety of other academic disciplines – e.g., political science, international relations, security studies – have started to show interest in the concept of resilience as it relates to the multi-disciplinary issues of protracted humanitarian crises, and (in)security more broadly. The year 2012 for example, saw the launch of the peer-reviewed journal ‘*Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses*’, which hosts a variety of articles that address how resilience operates.

Despite the interests that emanates from academia, there is considerable unease with the widespread use of resilience in (international) policies. In fact, critical scholars have noted a “worrying consensus across government, business, and some quarters of academia that resilience is an unquestionably ‘good’ value to be striven for, invested in, and cultivated throughout society at whatever cost” (Brasset & Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p.46). In contrast, critical accounts have expressed a wide variety of concerns, including for example over the neoliberal character of resilience (Brasset & Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Chandler 2014), the redistribution of responsibility for security from governments to the affected peoples themselves (Howell, 2015a; Mohaupt, 2009), and the ‘inevitability’ which resilience lends to the character of contemporary crises (Evans & Reid, 2014).

### **1.3 Setting the objective: Linking theory to policy and practice**

At a glance, there seems to be a considerable gap between the extensive uptake of resilience in to (international) policies related to the governance of fragile contexts and protracted crises on the one hand, and critical scholarship that points to the (potential) impact of resilience on political life, on the other. These two debates converge around the fact that at present, resilience remains poorly understood.

The aim of this exploratory study was twofold. The first aim was to further our understanding of resilience as both as a theoretical and policy concept, as it relates to the governance of protracted crises, humanitarian emergencies, and insecurity as a result of political violence and/or armed conflict. The second aim of this study was to further the understanding of resilience in particular with regards to the intersection between the theoretical and policy levels so as to shed some light on the apparent theory-policy gap.

In order to do so, the current academic debates on resilience have been reviewed in order to provide an up-to-date narrative analysis of how resilience is understood. In addition, resilience experts from various international governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organisations have been interviewed in order to further the policy debate on resilience. These two sets of data will help to distil the similarities, differences and inconsistencies between the academic and policy debates.

Whereas the end to widespread political violence and armed conflict is far from in sight, effective, appropriate and acceptable responses to the turmoil in the world's fragile places are highly needed. This study analyses whether resilience is, or could be, one such a strategy.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the introduction it becomes clear that within the context of humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and fragility due to political violence and armed conflict, resilience is a concept *in the making*. This chapter explicates this study's theoretical framework, i.e. the way in which it has conceptualised 'resilience' as a basis for further understanding, and the factors deemed important for understanding why and how resilience became to be adopted within international policies. The following sections will therefore deal with resilience as a governance rationality and as policy discourse, and concludes with the study objective and research questions.

### 2.1 Resilience as a governance rationality and policy discourse

In the face of adversity, resilience may be understood as the ability to absorb the shock, adapt to the new reality, and transform in order to function similarly to, or better than, the situation before the crisis (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013; Lorenz, 2013). In the context of humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly, the concept of resilience is a prominent rationality underlying contemporary (inter)national responses. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the understanding of resilience within this particular context. For this purpose, resilience is firstly understood as a rationality underlying security governance, and secondly, as a policy discourse.

Governance, within this field, could be defined as the "increasingly organised and internationalised attempt to save the lives, enhance the welfare, and reduce the suffering of the world's most vulnerable populations" (Barnett, 2013, abstract). Going one step further, using Foucault's concept of 'governmentality', allows us to look more specifically at the why and *how* of governance. The term 'governmentality' links governance to thinking – *mentalité* in French, thereby illustrating that power and its underlying (political) rationality are indissoluble (Lemke, 2001). Governmentality indicates that 'government' (in the broadest sense of the word) defines not only the representation, but also structures the intervention (ibid). The term refers to a form of exercising power by way of an "ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its

principle form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault, 1991, p. 102 quoted in Larner & Walters, 2004). Resilience as governmentality thus refers to a specific way of exercising power by a mosaic of inter-, non-, and governmental organisations and institutions, guided by a way of thinking that determines the way in which a problem is framed (representation), as well as the way in which those problems should be tackled (action). This view of resilience as governmentality guides our review of the academic literature.

Discourse, as the second concept through which this study approaches resilience, is about meaning and making meaning within the context of the complex relations that create social life (Fairclough, 2010). It “encompasses not only the substantive content of ideas but also the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed. Discourse is not just ideas or ‘text’ (what is said) but also context (where, when, how, and why it was said). The term refers not only to structure (what is said, or where and how) but also to agency (who said what to whom)” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 305). The French philosopher Foucault, most often associated with the concept of ‘discourse’, theorised it as the convergence of knowledge and power. In other words, the practices of power through which certain knowledges become dominant, or come to be considered ‘truth’.

Knowledge, according to Foucault, “involves statements uttered in institutional sites in which [knowledge] is gained according to certain rules and procedures, by speakers who are authorised to say what counts as ‘truth’ in that particular context” (Nash, 2010, p. 22). It therefore relates to the idea of dominant frames, or even the concept of ‘paradigm’. Knowledge necessitates power in order to become a ‘truth’: fluid and relational, power can therefore only be identified in the “instances of its exercise” (Nash, 2010, p. 21).

The other way around holds true as well: the “manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body ... cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse” (Foucault, 1980, p. 93). Discourses, then, “*contribute* to [the] exercise [of power] in the production of social relations of authority and conformity [emphasis in original]” (Nash, 2010, p. 22). Within this view, resilience is understood as a set of knowledges that has become dominant, and which subsequently reproduces these particular power relations – this guides our analysis of the policy discourse around resilience. A critical analysis requires determining “how new objects of knowledge emerge, under what discursive and non-discursive conditions, and especially, what effects of power they produce” (Nash, 2010, p. 22).

Understanding resilience as a rationality underlying the performance of a particular order of power (governmentality) and understanding resilience as a set of ideas that become dominant through the exercise of power – and power that is exercised by the generation of knowledges (discourse) are two very similar processes. The difference is however, that the first view is concerned with resilience as a particular strategy for managing protracted crises, humanitarian emergencies, and (in)security that has political and social implications. The second view sees resilience more as a set of ideas

contained in talk uttered at meetings (i.e. conferences, summits, between colleagues, etc.), policy documents and such, which have become dominant because of its particular context, structure, and the actors involved.

## **2.2 Study objective and research questions**

The objective of this study is to critically explore the concept of ‘resilience’ in the context of (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly, by reviewing the contemporary academic debates on resilience from various disciplines (political science, international relations, security studies, development studies etc.), and exploring the opinions and perceptions of resilience experts in the field (e.g., policymakers), in order to advance current understandings of the concept of resilience as it relates to today’s fragile contexts due to political violence and armed conflict.

In order to do so, this study aims to answer the following research question: What does ‘resilience’ mean in the context of (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly due to political violence and armed conflict?

## METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this exploratory study is to critically explore the concept of resilience in relation to (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and general (in)security due to political violence and armed conflict, by reviewing current academic debates on resilience as a governance rationality and exploring the perceptions of experts on resilience as a policy discourse, in order to advance the resilience discussion on both the theoretical and policy level and in particular, at the intersection of these two fields. In order to answer the main research question: ‘What does ‘resilience’ mean in the context of (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly due to political violence and armed conflict?’, the study employed a narrative literature review supplemented with key informant interviews. These methods will now be discussed.

### 3.1 Narrative literature review

Recent work on resilience in the context of responding to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security has yielded diverse and interesting, and sometimes provocative, insights. Now there is a need for structuring these observations in order to make sense of where the current academic debate stands, and what the major themes are in academics’ explorations of resilience. In order to help answer the main research question: ‘What does ‘resilience’ mean in the context of (inter)national responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly due to political violence and armed conflict?’, a narrative literature review was conducted.

For the review, articles in scientific journals were initially selected if they used the word ‘resilience’ in the context of responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security connected to political violence and armed conflict (thus excluding natural disasters), and if they had been published between the years 2000 and 2016. Within this context, resilience had to refer to a governance rationality/policy concept, and the review thus excluded articles that measured for example the socio-psychological resilience of conflict-affected populations. All article types were included, except systematic literature reviews or meta-reviews.

Keywords that were used to search for relevant publications were “resilience” or “resilient” AND the industry: “aid industry”; “human security”; “humanitarian action”, “peacekeeping”, “protection of civilians”; “humanitarian governance”; “humanitarian response”; or the context: “armed conflict”; “post-conflict”; “civil war”; “humanitarian emergency”.

The searches were conducted in two databases; Web of Science, where the ‘cited by’ sections of initially selected articles were also searched, and Google Scholar, where the search was limited to the first 10 pages (= first 100 results). Articles were initially selected on the basis of whether the title and or the abstract indicated relevance. Table 3A below depicts an overview of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 3A**

Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication date between 2000-2016</li> <li>• Addresses resilience as a policy response to (in)security, conflict or post-conflict settings</li> <li>• Theoretical and empirical studies, as well as reports (grey literature) and commentaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication date before 2000</li> <li>• Addresses resilience as a policy response to natural disasters exclusively</li> <li>• (Meta-)Review articles</li> <li>• Does not use the word resilience, but ‘preparedness/readiness’, ‘building back better’, etc. (unless linked specifically)</li> </ul>

**Figure 3B**

Search tree: schematic representation of the search process.

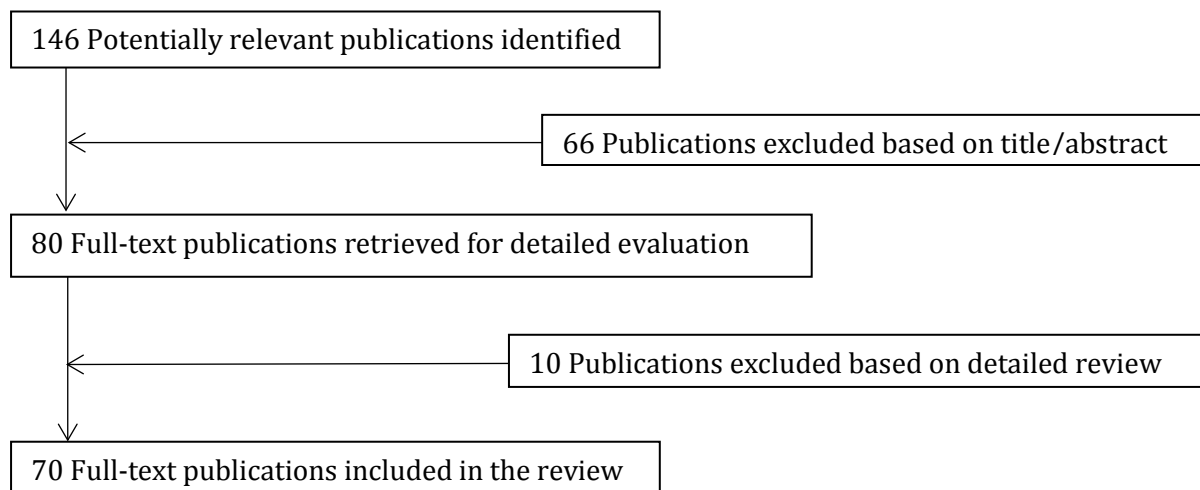


Figure 3B pictured above presents a schematic representation of the search process. Initially, 146 potentially relevant articles were selected. During a second selection

process, these publications were more carefully evaluated on the basis of their title and abstract, closely monitoring relevance alongside the selection criteria. This resulted in the discarding of 66 articles which were deemed irrelevant. The 80 remaining articles were carefully read, after which a further ten articles were again discarded. The remaining 70 were included in the narrative literature review.

The selection process was carried out in April 2016. Therefore, any relevant articles published after this date have not been systematically included in this review. However, small-scale unsystematic searches were done sporadically since April, and have resulted in the inclusion of a few newer articles. Moreover, non-scientific literature ('grey literature', e.g., policy papers) was added where these provided relevant examples.

### 3.2 Key informant interviews

In addition to a narrative literature review, this study employed key informant interviews in order to help answer the main research question: 'What does 'resilience' mean in the context of (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly due to political violence and armed conflict?'. This additional method was used to supplement and compare findings from the literature with perspectives from experts, i.e., people who work directly with the concept of resilience. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of the exploratory nature of this study as well as the relative freedom that this structure provides.

The interview questions were loosely based on the Political Power Framework (PPF), better known as the Shiffman and Smith framework, which was designed to explore why some issues or initiatives become political priorities, and others do not (Shiffman & Smith, 2007). In essence, the PPF is a model for policy analysis, but one that emphasises the role of power – not just as it relates to the various types of actors involved and their relative levels of agency, but also to the power of certain ideas and the way they are framed (and not framed), the power of particular contexts that inhibit or enhance political will, and the power of particular issue characteristics (Shiffman & Smith, 2007). Issue frames, defined as the selection of "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (Entman, 1993, p. 52), is similar to Foucault's ideas about how power relations produce and reproduce certain knowledges in order to arrive at particular dominant discourses. The PPF, or the Shiffman and Smith framework, can be found below in Table 3C.

**Table 3C**

The Political Power Framework (Shiffman & Smith, 2007).

	<b>Description</b>	<b>Factors shaping political priority</b>
<b>Actor power</b>	The strength of the individuals	1. Policy community cohesion: the degree of coalescence among the network of



	and organisations concerned with the issue	<p>individuals and organisations that are centrally involved with the issue at the global level</p> <p>2. Leadership: the presence of individuals capable of uniting the policy community and acknowledged as particularly strong champions for the cause</p> <p>3. Guiding institutions: the effectiveness of organisations or coordinating mechanisms with a mandate to lead the initiative</p> <p>4. Civil society mobilisation: the extent to which grassroots organisations have mobilised to press international and national political authorities to address the issue at the global level</p>
<b>Ideas</b>	The way in which those involved with the issue understand and portray it	<p>5. Internal frame: the degree to which the policy community agrees on the definition of, causes of, and solutions to the problem</p> <p>6. External frame: public portrayals of the issue in ways that resonate with external audiences, especially the political leaders who control resources</p>
<b>Political contexts</b>	The environments in which actors operate	<p>7. Policy windows: political movements when global conditions align favourably for an issue, presenting opportunities for advocates to influence decision makers</p> <p>8. Global governance structure: the degree to which norms and institutions operating in a sector provide a platform for effective collective action</p>
<b>Issue characteristics</b>	Features of the problem	<p>9. Credible indicators: clear measures that show the severity of the problem and that can be used to monitor progress</p> <p>10. Severity: the size of the burden relative to other problems, as indicated by objective measures such as mortality levels</p> <p>11. Effective interventions: the extent to which proposed means of addressing the problem are clearly explained, cost effective, backed by scientific evidence, simple to implement, and inexpensive</p>

The interview guide (i.e. the interview questions) was based not only on the PPF, but also on three informal (two face-to-face and one telephone) scoping interviews conducted with individuals from academia and policymaking, as well as the literature. The interview guide can be found in annex A.

Key informants were recruited through a combination of purposive selection and snowball sampling. Their selection was dependent on, for example, whether they had published on resilience (e.g., policy papers), the organisations they worked for and its relative standing within international resilience work, the positions these individuals held within their respective organisations and/or their previous programmatic experience with resilience work. This was meant to ensure their expertise with regards to how the concept of resilience is used in an applied research and or policy implementation setting.

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via Skype in the months April-July 2016, and lasted between 30-60 minutes. At the start of the interview, the aims of the study were carefully explained, after which their informed consent was acquired, either by signing the informed consent form, or by verbally agreeing to the interview and the audio recording. The study information and consent form can be found in annex B and C, respectively. The audio-recordings of the interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim for the purpose of analysis, and were analysed through a combination of theme-identification techniques. This entailed looking primarily for repetitions, metaphors, similarities and differences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

## NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the results of the literature review. The literature searches were conducted in April 2016, and after a thorough selection process described in the previous chapter, a total of 70 articles on resilience from various academic fields were analysed. From the literature narratives, five major themes could be identified: what resilience is and the genealogy of the concept; the conceptualisation of contemporary risks and crises; resilience as a governance strategy; theorisation of the resilient subject; and finally, the future prospects and challenges of employing resilience as a rationality underlying responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security. These themes will now be discussed.

### 4.1 What is resilience?

With some differences in emphasis, resilience seems to be generally understood as a characteristic of systems, structures, organisations, communities, individuals, materials or biological organisms' responses to crisis, characterised by the ability to *absorb* the shock, *adapt* to the new reality, and *transform* in order to function either as before the crisis (i.e. return to status quo), or, preferably, in a superior manner (see for example Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013; Lorenz, 2013). As Jennison (2008) asserts, resilience is not just about recovery with preservation of functionality, but to respond to adversity and “in doing so reach a *higher* level of functioning [emphasis added]” (p. 342). Indeed, Kruke and Morsut (2015) argue that systems have to implement what is learned post-crisis into subsequent prevention and preparedness activities in order to be resilient. Importantly, many authors emphasise that resilience is a *process*, rather than an outcome (see for example Almedon, 2011; Bourbeau, 2013, 2015; Bouvier, 2012; Chandler, 2012; Frerks et al., 2011; Norris et al., 2008; Reid, 2012; Walklate, McGarry & Mythen, 2014; Zebrowski, 2012), illustrated by Welsh's (2014) remark that resilience is about “continual adaptive cycles of growth, accumulation, restructuring and renewal” (p. 15).

Whereas almost all authors on resilience refer to the conceptual diversity that exists within both literature and practice (illustrated by the EU report *Resilience in Practice*), some actively try to clear up some of the existing ambiguities by distinguishing

resilience from related concepts, notably ‘resistance’ and ‘vulnerability’. Norris et al. (2008) for example, notes that resistance is often conceptualised as the time it takes for a system to break apart under pressure, whereas resilience could be seen as the time it takes for a system to return to an equilibrium, i.e. a stable state, after disturbance. A study on political violence-related trauma defines resistance as never developing symptoms, whereas resilience is characterised by the initial development of symptoms, followed by recovery to a level that indicates absence of symptoms (Hobfoll et al., 2009). To be sure, resilience does not preclude dysfunction and distress, however, they are understood as *temporary* and followed by return to functioning, whereas *persistent* dysfunction results from vulnerability (Norris et al., 2008). As a governance rationality, simply *not* breaking under pressure or *never* developing symptoms may seem preferable to the alternative – particularly with an eye to costs. This however, becomes impossible in the context of a worldview where risks and crises are perceived as inevitable – a notion further discussed in section 3.

Other authors specifically address resilience’s juxtaposition to vulnerability. Evans and Reid (2013) for example, claim that vulnerability operates as resilience’s underlying ontology, as a precondition for resilience, which intimately ties the two concepts together in an interdependent relationship. Almedon (2011) takes a slightly different approach and asserts that responses to crises might be characterised by either vulnerability or resilience, whereby the latter focuses on positive transformation rather than dysfunction. Miller et al. (2010) treat resilience and vulnerability as complementary concepts rather than competitive ones. Whereas resilience emphasises transformation and learning, vulnerability focuses more on power and the limits to individual agency – both perspectives thus have valuable contributions to make to our understanding of systems’ responses to crises (Miller et al., 2010). This of course touches upon possible de-politicisation due to a resilience approach, a critique that will be further explored in section 4.

## 4.2 Genealogy of resilience

‘Resilience’ is derived from the Latin word ‘resilio’, which means ‘to jump back’ (Brasset, Croft & Vaughan-Williams, 2013). Naturally, the term resilience comes with a variety of additional meanings inherited from the different disciplinary contexts in which it has been used before (Norris et al., 2008). Walker and Cooper (2011) illustrate this well, tracing resilience’s genealogy through the fields of engineering, socio-ecological systems science, and psychology. They relate it in particular to the work of ecologist Holling and economist Hayek, whose contributions to our current understandings of resilience they elegantly explain (Walker & Cooper, 2011). Of course the differences between different ‘resiliences’ (Coaffee & Fussey, 2015; Walklate et al., 2014) will depend on the conceptual contributions of the field (and closely related fields) within which it is employed. Welsh (2014) for example, explains that the conceptualisation of resilience differs depending on its disciplinary origins: mind-body

disciplines often fall back on a person-community centred conceptualisation of resilience, whereas nature-society disciplines are more inclined to work with a biophysical environment-community understanding of resilience.

Although the concept of resilience has been widely employed at least since the 1970s (Walker & Cooper, 2011), the concept is relatively new in political science, international relations, and security studies (Bourbeau, 2013, 2015; Brassett & Vaughan-Williams, 2015). Moreover, being well-known in disaster studies (see for example Adger et al., 2005; Manyena, 2006), resilience is relatively unknown in research on managing man-made disasters, such as political violence (including terrorist attacks) and armed conflict. According to Joseph (2013a), “contemporary conditions have given rise to certain practices of governance by which the idea of resilience finds a home ... [resilience] has been plucked from the ecology literature and used in a fairly instrumental way to justify particular forms of governance which emphasise responsible conduct” (p. 40). Likewise, Reid (2012) asserts that the emergence of resilience in these fields owes to the logical link between sustainable development and neoliberal rationalities underlying contemporary security strategies, where the latter becomes a solution to the problematic inherent in the former. There is, however, unlikely to be any clear-cut answer as to whether resilience ideas inspired particular practices, or whether it was found to fit an existing set of practices –there is most likely a combination of both processes at play.

The literature does not only address how resilience has been used in various disciplines but to some extent also tracks how resilience has been used in various risk and security policies by western governments and international institutions. Walker and Cooper (2011) for example, iterate that already in the 1990s, resilience was used by international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank in their risk strategies. A number of authors refer specifically to the use of the term by the UK government, for example the establishment of the London Resilience Forum in 2002, which inspired governments to design more anticipatory and proactive security policies (Coaffee & Wood, 2006; see also Coaffee, Wood & Rogers, 2009; Kaufman, 2013). In particular, authors refer to the UK Civil Contingencies Act of 2004 which established the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, as well as Local Resilience Forums and Regional Resilience Teams, which were really about fostering citizens’ self-organising capabilities in case of calamities (Brassett & Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Coaffee & Rogers, 2008; Welsh, 2014). Almedon (2011) asserts that the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease and the 9/11 attacks were the primary events that “triggered a search for meaning that ultimately introduced the concept of ‘national resilience’ into the English language” (p. 147). Nevertheless may the word as used by the British government mean something different in another context. Joseph (2013a) for example, argues that resilience is very much about the individual approach to risk within the Anglo-Saxon discourse, whereas in the US, resilience focuses more on private sector engagement, while France’s use of the concept is limited and where used, met with confusion (Joseph, 2013b).

The flourishing of resilience may in part be explained by the circulation of complexity and complex adaptive systems discourses (Welsh, 2014). These tend to reconstruct the world, thus necessitating a different response. To this, we now turn.

### 4.3 Contemporary risks and crises

Violent acts of terrorism, protracted crises and widespread political instability, floods, earthquakes and droughts set off by climate change, and global financial instability have engendered the idea that we “live in times of existential crisis” (European Union, 2016, p. 7). Resilience entered the political and public discourse exactly in times of, and constitutes a response to, the on-going instability and rising secularism in the Middle East, as well as unrelenting long-standing crises in the Sahel and central Africa that act as catalysts not only for religious radicalisation amongst European Muslim minorities and tragic terror attacks in Europe, Turkey and the Middle East, but also for an unprecedented refugee crisis and subsequent political polarisation among European citizens – aptly illustrated by the Brexit and the rise of European populism. Our world is an increasingly dangerous one. As a response to the turbulence of our times, ‘resilience’ indicates a profound change in the way in which we understand the world, and contemporary risks and crises in particular. Much of the writing on resilience is exactly about the particular conception of risks and crises underlying resilience.

First, inherent to the idea of absorbing a shock, adapting to a new reality, and transforming in the face of adversity, is the inevitability of contemporary risks and crises. In essence, resilience is not so much about prevention as it is about accepting that emergencies happen exactly because it is impossible to prevent them all (Bulley, 2013). According to Coaffee and Wood (2006), our idea of being able to defend ourselves revealed inadequate after the attacks on 11 September 2001, implying that risks can only be managed, not eradicated, as we previously thought. Indeed, as Evans and Reid (2014) illustrate darkly: “[r]ather than openly declaring some vision of the future that *overcomes* the plagues of suffering engulfing the human species, what we encounter is a veritable landscape of projected images that is littered with the corpses of our catastrophes to come [emphasis added]” (p. 7). Our environment has been reconceptualised as terroristic, and our society as always on the brink of extinction (Duffield, 2011). Moving beyond a ‘utopia of safety’, “resilience preaches the impossibility and folly of thinking we might resist danger, and instead accept living a life of permanent exposure to endemic dangers” (Evans & Reid, 2013, p. 95). In a world that is understood as fundamentally dangerous, final security suddenly becomes impossible.

Second, because risks and crises are understood as not only widespread but also inevitable, resilience, unsurprisingly perhaps, touches upon the idea of normality versus abnormality. Whereas emergencies and disasters have always been conceptualised as abnormal events or events that ‘break’ normality, their ubiquity is now reconceptualised as the normal state of affairs. Or as Duffield (2011) puts it, we have naturalised a state

of total war. As a result, a stable state (an equilibrium) has become the exception, whereas continuous *disruption* of a stable system, that is, *disequilibrium*, is the new normal (Frerks et al., 2011; Smith & Fischbacher, 2009). Some authors regard resilience as in fact the acceptance of disequilibrium as a principle of organisation (Manyena & Gordon, 2015; Walker & Cooper, 2011), others ask whether there are perhaps multiple points of equilibrium (Smith & Fischbacher, 2009), emergent equilibria (Zebrowski, 2012), or whether resilience constitutes the ability to move between different states of temporary equilibrium (Corry, 2014; Duffield, 2012). Resilience thus touches, quite dramatically, on our sense of what is normal; peace or war.

Third, besides endemic, inevitable and normalised, contemporary risks and crises are perceived as inherently complex. Often understood as so-called ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel & Webber, 1973), they are characterized by complex interdependencies, transcendence of geographical as well as disciplinary boundaries, and the complete absence of straightforward solutions. Smith and Fischbacher (2009) for example, speak of ‘black swans’, low probability (unpredictable) events with devastating consequences, much like September 11. Such events have multiple causal agents and pathways for transmission and transcend not just geographical borders, but also technical, political, and disciplinary boundaries, which proves fundamentally problematic for our silo-mentality (Smith & Fischbacher, 2009, see also Jennison, 2008). In a profoundly complex world where predicting, identifying, and thus preventing risks and crises becomes impossible, resilience provides “a new basis for engaging uncertainty” (Dunn Cavelty, Kaufman & Sjøby Kristensen, 2015, p. 5; see also Pugh, Gabay & Williams, 2014). Or as Aradau (2014) puts it: “surprise as inherent to our social and ecological systems entails a different modality of governance ... attuned to the unexpected and unknowable, rather than purporting to prevent, anticipate or protect against the unexpected and the uncertain” (p. 7). In this line of reasoning, resilience would focus on effects rather than causes, because causes cannot be fully understood. As a result, attempts to diagnose and tackle today’s problems seems to no longer be an obligation (Schmidt, 2015).

Finally, risks and crises are in part unpredictable (unknowable) and complex due to the increasing complexities and interconnectedness of our societies. Societies’ systems are in constant flux in reaction to changes in other systems, which ultimately makes surprise more common than predictability (Norris et al., 2008). Such complexities do not only exacerbate the consequences of crises, but also reveal the vulnerabilities of our societies (Al-Khudhairy et al., 2012; Allenby & Fink, 2005; Burkle, 2011). In this way, emergencies have been reconceptualised as inevitable attributes of society’s internal functioning: emergencies do not just happen to us, but we, unconsciously, create them (Duffield, 2012). A good example of this is how international travel contributes to the spread of contagious diseases, or how urban spaces become ideal targets for man-made and natural disasters because of their high population density and the concentration of economic assets (Allenby & Fink, 2005). System efficiency (i.e. connectedness, interdependence) may thus *decrease* resilience, because if one part of the system fails, the whole system could come down (Norris et al., 2008). Here, ‘decoupling’ may be one

strategy of reducing the impact of the cascading effects of crises (Al-Khudairy et al., 2012). As such, Evans and Reid (2014) assert that “all our castles are made from sand” (p. 20). In this “suspension of externality” (Schmidt, 2015, p. 409), the divide between the external (the crisis) and the internal (the affected subject) ceases to exist. Instead, they are interdependent, of not actually one and the same. This shakes the foundations upon which traditional conceptions of internal (i.e. national) and external (i.e. foreign) security rest (Coaffee & Fussey, 2015) – best illustrated by an excerpt from Frederica Mogherini’s foreword to the Global Strategy: “my neighbour’s and my partner’s weaknesses are my own weaknesses” (EU, 2016). In a similar fashion, Pugh et al. (2013) demonstrate that the UK is moving away from development for the moral sake of development, to development for the sake of the UK’s own security, arguing that ‘if my surroundings are peaceful, I will be peaceful’. The next sections will further elaborate on the collapse of the external-internal divide, and the internalisation of risks and emergencies.

#### **4.4 Resilience as governance**

Many authors on the subject of resilience are concerned with how resilience, as a rationality underlying governance of (inevitable, complex) risks and crises, plays out in practice, especially with regards to its profound impact on state-citizen relationships. Importantly, our changed understanding of contemporary risks and crises requires a new understanding of governance, because: “in an ontologically complex world, decisions must naturally acquire a different character; that is, they can no longer be conceived in terms of goal-oriented decisions that make a change in the world and are then to be accounted for and evaluated on this basis” (Schmidt, 2015, p. 407).

As a governance rationality, resilience tends to transfer responsibility for security away from government and instead to (civil) society, thereby replacing traditional top-down structures with (seemingly) bottom-up ones (Howell, 2015a). It thus *decentralizes* power and responsibility to the locale, “inverting traditional security logics based on state level control” (Coaffee & Fussey, 2015, p. 87, see also Coaffee & Wood, 2006). Whereas in the past, the state was seen as having the ultimate duty to provide security, resilience instead seeks to “displace both top-down direction and attempts to instrumentalise market rationalities by self-reflexive constructions of bottom-up solutions ... necessary for governance in a society which is changing fast and where neither the market nor the state seems capable of directing or addressing the changes required” (Chandler, 2014, p.7). In other words, inasmuch as governments are faced with the inability to provide security *because* they cannot control nor direct the external world (Chandler, 2014), citizens are tasked with organising themselves locally, in order to provide for their own communities’ security. Security practices are thus extended into everyday life (Coaffee & Rogers, 2008; Lentzos & Rose, 2009). As a consequence, politics are reduced to the mere “administration of life” – clearly different from the more traditional liberal framings of security practices as state-centric, national or



territorial forms of mobilization, protection, regulation (Chandler, 2013b, p. 221). Note however, that assigning responsibilities to citizens and communities as ‘active and responsible contributors to security’ rather than the institutions of the state (Ewards, 2009; Reid, 2012; Welsh, 2014), conflicts with the problematisation of society as the architect of its own risks and crises (Dunn Cavelty et al, 2015).

It is perhaps unsurprising that in the light of this shift from state-based to society-based understandings of security practices (Chandler, 2012), resilience has been passionately critiqued for its neoliberal character (see for example Chandler 2013a; 2013b; Duffield, 2012; Joseph, 2013a; Reid, 2012; Rogers, 2013). In addition, it is not unfathomable that in a time where not only the state is perceived as being unable to provide security (due to the inevitability of risks and crises), but where states are also faced with *a depletion of funds*, that delegating responsibility to citizens is killing two birds with one stone. *The EU Approach to Resilience* for example, argues that resilience is a *cost-effective* strategy, not only better for the people involved, but also *cheaper* (EU, 2012). This logically prompts the question whether resilience is not just a rationale underlying necessary budget cuts.

Howell (2015a) reminds us though that interpreting resilience as serving austerity fails to take resilience serious enough, and moreover, that the responsabilisation argument not only betrays a nostalgia for the welfare state, but also treats governance as a very top-down process. Instead, Howell (2015b) argues, resilience is about both optimisation as well as reducing costs. In a similar fashion, Schmidt (2015) argues that the neoliberal critique ignores resilience’s “positive agenda and ... empowering promise” (p. 404), and that the concept should instead be understood as a *response* to neoliberalism’s inherent frustrations, rather than a continuation of it. Corry (2014) argues that using neoliberalism to explain resilience, in fact obscures the varieties of articulations of resilience as well as the complexity of its normative implications. Moreover, these authors “appear to make the mistake of equating a particular government’s use of resilience with the concept of resilience. In doing so, these scholars run the risk of reproducing what they seek to criticize, that is, the intention and capacity of states to dictate the terms of debate and to define how a concept should be understood and employed” (Bourbeau, 2015, p. 379).

Joseph (2014) for example, conceptualises resilience not as states absolving themselves from the responsibility for their citizens’ safety, but as ‘regulation from a distance’ (see for a more critical account Duffield, 2012). The EU for example, encourages responsible behaviour through an emphasis on ownership, partnership and peer review in its *Supporting Horn of African Resilience* (SHARE) and *l’Alliance Globale pour l’Initiative Résilience Sahel* (AGIR) projects (Joseph, 2014). As such, citizens are not completely left to their own devices, but rather, states ‘nudge’ (Chandler, 2013b; Coaffee, 2013) citizens towards self-organization and control through *protocols*, in some sort of ‘regulated self-organisation’ (Kaufman, 2013). There is an interesting dilemma here. On the one hand, crises are unknowable – which implies that responses to crises can only be emergent, i.e. take form as the crisis unfolds – yet on the other

hand, the form such responses should take are nevertheless prescribed in protocols. Pilav (2012) rightly wonders how spontaneous behaviour can be planned *before* crisis strikes. She illustrates the creativity of citizen responses to the challenges they faced during the siege of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, like building makeshift ‘walls’ between buildings in order to limit snipers’ visibility (ibid). This implies that resilience cannot simply be imposed from above, but must be cultivated from the ground up, by individuals, companies, communities (Flynn, 2011). Otherwise, Chandler (2012) argues, resilience is nothing more than (external) interventions reconceptualised as empowerment. Indeed, Rogers (2013) asserts that whereas resilience has the potential of being a bottom-up enabling metaphor, it is currently merely a tool of management.

## 4.5 The resilient subject

Resilience, as a mode of governance, has implications for the kind of subjectivities it purports to create, characterised by vigilance, entrepreneurship, de-politicisation, and responsabilisation for non-resilient outcomes. In the scholarly analyses of what resilience demands of the subject of governance, it becomes clear that resilience is in fact a normative concept (Chandler, 2012). Its focus on the individual is a particular feature of (west) European governance however, and may be different for other parts of the world (Joseph, 2013a).

First, authors argue that not only do we, as a ‘truth’, live in an increasingly dangerous world, resilience requires its subjects to be *aware* of the dangers it is surrounded with. It means to “accept that one is fundamentally vulnerable” (Evans & Reid, 2013, p. 84), and, subsequently, to constantly prepare for, adapt to, and live with a spectrum of possible – yet unknowable – risks (Brasset et al., 2013; Duffield, 2011). This emphasis on being prepared for the worst comes down to, according to Duffield (2012), and Lentzos and Rose (2009), an instrumentalisation of fear – where fear is used to force citizens to not only be prepared for, but also have the ability to quickly return to normal or improved functioning following a crisis. Moreover, when faced with a perpetual sense of danger and uncertainty, state leaders’ claims that they are keeping citizens safe, may seem more credible (Coaffee et al., 2009). In practice, such a rhetoric of imminent danger often encourages citizens to report anything they find suspicious (Coaffee & Fussey, 2015), effectively creating micro-vigilantes of all of us, where we are tasked to “police our locales in a manner which complements the outsourcing logic of neoliberal governance” (Evans & Reid, 2014, p. 91). Fearfulness may also lead to societies being more accepting of pervasive security technologies, yet important questions of how this sense of danger would or does impact on social relations within society (Malcolm, 2013), or how resilience as being fearful constructs freedom and un-freedom (Lentzos & Rose, 2009), remain unanswered.

Second, the resilient subject is not only expected to live with the idea that disaster, with its possible devastating consequences, could strike at any moment, (s)he is also required to see this imminent danger as an opportunity: after all, learning emanates from

exposure (Rogers, 2013). Going one step further, resilience not only renders it unnecessary to try and ‘solve’ risks and crises (as that is impossible), but it actively promotes an understanding of risks and crises as opportunities under a sort of neo-Darwinist presumption that “‘Keeping out of harm’s way’ (something Don Quixote preached but never practised, hence his longevity) may be harmful” (Wildavsky, 1988, p. 763). Indeed, only through exposure to uncertainty, one can develop the “desirable attributes of foresight, enterprise, and self-reliance” and as a result, “the ability to change and adapt becomes a virtue in itself” (Duffield, 2011, p. 757). Resilience then reconceptualises agency from shaping the external environment, to changing inner life through learning from exposure (Schmidt, 2015). In the EU’s *Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries*, this is described as “an opportunity for transformation, in terms of adaptation to changing environments, empowerment, improved livelihoods and economic opportunities” (European Commission, 2013, p. 3). Schmidt (2015) summarises resilience as “adaptive (self-)governance [that] can emerge as the new promise of empowerment: agential capacities to turn inner lives and inner workings into the site of effective, intentional and transformative agency based on the stimuli received from environments one is embedded into” (p. 420). Although this focus on strengths and capacities rather than social dysfunction resembles aspects from positive psychology (Almedon, 2011), ‘embracing risk’ and ‘thriving on chaos’ (O’Malley, 2010) are not unproblematic constructs. It may feel embarrassing to talk about positive experiences and resilience in situations in which people strive to survive in appalling conditions, sometimes victims of inhumane and degrading treatment, or extreme violence (Bouvier, 2012). Indeed, the idea that disasters represent an opportunity to ‘build back better’ may be difficult to convey to those who have lost everything due to a crisis, and legitimately so – *especially* when it concerns man-made disasters. Moreover, if resilience presupposes the necessity and positivity of human exposure to danger (Evans & Reid, 2013), does that mean that we, in order to learn, *have* to expose ourselves to danger? In this way, resilience risks becoming a neo-Darwinist measure of the fitness to survive (Duffield, 2012; Walker & Cooper, 2011). It is nevertheless important to remember that although resilient functioning is constructed as uncommon, *dysfunction* is often rarer than one might think (Barber & Doty, 2013; Walklate et al., 2014).

Third, resilience is postulated as a *learnable* skill rather than a natural characteristic; as human attributes reconfigured into coping strategies and skills that can be learned by anyone, making resilience “a technology of the self that can be both learnt and taught” (Duffield, 2012, p. 487). This is well-demonstrated by some authors’ critiques on military resilience training (see for example Howell, 2012; 2015b; O’Malley, 2010; Walklate et al., 2014), which, although meant to prevent soldiers from developing (symptoms of) post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), de facto responsabilises them for their own mental wellbeing. As a consequence, the moral basis upon which veterans can claim healthcare entitlements disappears (Howell, 2015b). Problematic in this conceptualization is that *if* resilience can be learned, it can also be *failed* to learn. This makes subjects responsible for their own vulnerabilities—regardless of whether these

are the product of their inherent weaknesses, or of socio-economic and political inequalities. To be more precise, responsabilising people for their resilience is de facto the same as responsabilising people for their vulnerabilities (Bulley, 2013). Chandler (2013a) argues that resilience as such ideologically affirms the responsibility of non-western societies for their own threats and insecurities, disregarding any role that western governments might have played in the instability of their societies. In this case, resilience risks becoming an apologia for the limits of international intervention, with the limits being reconceptualised as internal products of the societies that are being intervened upon (ibid). Going one step further, resilience risks responsabilising societies for political violence and armed conflict of which they have become victims.

Finally, and building on the above, resilience has a profoundly depoliticizing effect (Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015). The resilient subject, according to Chandler and Reid (2016), is one that “must permanently struggle to accommodate itself to the world: not a subject that can conceive of changing the world” (p. 53). After all, we are no longer in control due to the changed understanding of contemporary risks and crises – our only choice is to adapt to the conditions of our suffering (Reid, 2012). Because the state cannot promise security, the resilient subject does not look to states to secure their wellbeing – they have been disciplined into believing the necessity to secure it from themselves (Reid, 2012). As such, resilience “withdraws from the promise [of security] as it disavows the transformative capacity of collective political action and remains hostage to the limits of knowledge” (Aradau, 2014). As a result, resilience adds up to a degradation of political capacities (Reid, 2012), exactly because decisions become non-decisions in the political sense: they are detached from changing reality in favour of establishing a certain future (Schmidt, 2015). Chandler argues that if social reality comes down to a product of choice (i.e. to be resilient or non-resilient) rather than external structures open to understanding and transformation, freedom and choice become meaningless, and indeed choice becomes a mechanism for allocating blame (Chandler, 2013b). In his study on internationally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee camps, Ilcan & Rygiel (2015) argue that resilience works disempowering exactly because IDPs and refugees are encouraged to resign themselves to their new reality – rather than demanding political change and mobility. Resilience is ultimately about adaptation within the system, rather than system change (ibid). While an individual’s inherent traits interact with its context, research across disciplines shows clearly, that the search for human capacity in the face of adversity should focus on the “(compromised) availability of social, economic, educational, cultural, and political resources that all individuals ... need to move forward with their lives” (Barber & Doty, 2013, p. 247). Resilience nevertheless conveniently precludes challenges to the systems and institutions in which the individual is located (de Lint & Shazal, 2013), diverting attention away from questions of power and justice, or the type of futures that can be imagined (Welsh, 2014).

## 4.6 A future for resilience?

One might consider the academic literature on resilience, in the in the context of responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security connected to political violence and armed conflict, to be rather critical, especially with regards to what resilience presupposes about the nature of contemporary risks and crises, and how we, as citizens, are supposed to act upon them. Despite these critical readings of resilience, the concept also has a number of positive attributes, which could form a basis for further engagement with this novel concept.

On a very practical level for example, resilience is abstract and malleable enough to incorporate different worlds (Walker & Cooper, 2011), enabling new practices and forms of cooperation. According to Duffield (2012), resilience is a ‘lingua franca’ – a common language able to effectively cross disciplinary boundaries. Pospisil and Kühn (2016) for example, illustrate how resilience has provided a common ground for donors to engage with BRICS countries and other ‘non-traditional donors’ (e.g. Turkey, Indonesia, the Gulf States). In the *Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries* for example, the EU asserts that achieving resilience “requires all EU actors (humanitarian, development, political) to work differently and more effectively together” (European Commission, 2013, p. 4) – actors that historically have been significantly separated along ideological, institutional and financial lines. Indeed, resilience is a convening concept with a brokering capacity “to bring people (practitioners, policy makers), organizations with different initial agendas, and communities of practice from different sectors, together around the same table with the unique objective of ‘strengthening resilience’” (Béné et al., 2012, p. 45). As radical multi-disciplinarity (Duffield, 2012), resilience represents a new way of thinking that creates opportunities to think more creatively about hybrid solutions and to build on what already exists (de Weijer, 2013). As a universal imperative, resilience has the capacity to transcend differences and provide a unifying rationale for greater international cooperation (Flynn, 2011). Still, other buzzwords acting as ‘lingua francas’ (like ‘sustainable development’, ‘human security’) have preceded resilience, and it remains to be seen whether resilience will truly bring about tangible changes in the way that wicked problems are addressed by the international community, or whether it is just another popular but short-lived word, bound to disappear as quickly as it advanced.

The (ongoing) ambiguity around resilience is not due to conceptual obscurity or a product of diverse genealogies (Zebrowski, 2012), but because, resilience in abstraction might mean as little as an ontological fact (Schmidt, 2015, p. 419) or “a capacity of life itself” (Evans & Reid, p. 33). That is, until we start asking ‘resilience to what?’, ‘resilience of whom?’, and ‘resilience by what means? This demonstrates that as a concept, resilience is fluid enough to be applied in various contexts, adapted to different institutional visions, and translated into diverse strategies. Yet because of this flexibility, resilience does run the risk of becoming a “monotone characteristic of everything” (Duffield, 2012), a catch-all phrase or container concept. Yet only so, when we continue to understand resilience as having a unitary, uniform understanding (which

must yet be found or agreed upon), rather than as a variety of ‘resiliences’ (Coaffee & Fussey, 2015; Walklate et al., 2014). When we understand resilience as highly context and issue specific (Prior & Hagmann, 2014) and thus necessarily requiring a different interpretation depending on what it refers to, we avert the danger of resilience becoming an empty signifier – filled with any meaning to justify whichever goal (Weichselgartner & Kelman, 2014).

Although the international community has long struggled with making their practices more inclusive, resilience has the potential to revive the push for a recognition of local communities and civil society organizations’ in-depth knowledge of ‘the field’. This is crucial to help tailor policies and practices to the situation on the ground, in particular for conflict-affected states, which are more diverse and complex than any other group of countries (Levine & Mosel, 2014). Local ownership is crucial to the success of any resilience-building activity, because, as Chandler asserts: “Changing or adapting behaviour and understandings need to come from within; resilience cannot be ‘given’ or ‘produced’ by outside actors, only facilitated or inculcated through understanding the mechanisms through which problematic social practices are reproduced” (Chandler, 2013a, p. 277). To some extent this is already happening by placing national plans and national decision-making central to emergency response (see for example the *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis*, which is led by Jordan’s Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation). Likewise, in Ryan’s (2012) assessment of UNDP’s *Infrastructures for Peace* programme, resilience recognises and respects people’s agency, institutions and systems, as it enhances the capacities of poor/fragile states to deal with, and overcome, the circumstances that block their development. The question is however, what are the grassroots level factors that contribute to individuals’/communities’ resilience, let alone how can we strengthen them. Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager (2015) for example, studied the role of local faith communities in resilient emergency responses, but asserts that such community structures are often overlooked.

Despite resilience’s inherent emphasis on local capacities, Coaffee and Rogers (2008) note the absence of citizen voices in the resilience discourse, where ‘the citizen’ is constructed as a passive recipient of information in a process dominated by a specialist consortium of experts. Here, we are confronted with a gap between what resilience preaches, and how it plays out in practice. If resilience is really about inclusion, it’s important to start including citizens in a meaningful way (Coaffee & Rogers, 2008) – if not, resilience remains just as much a top-down governance exercise as its liberal predecessors. Likewise, if resilience is really about providing a sustainable solution to contemporary risks and crises, programmes should start addressing the core structural factors that increase people’s risks (Williams, 2013). Yet this touches again upon system structure, an issue raised in the previous section. As such, if resilience naturalises a state of crises (Duffield, 2011) in order to direct our attention towards the immediate event (i.e. terrorist attack, earthquake) rather than every day’s structural violence, or the so-called ‘liquid evil’ so pervasive as to almost become invisible (Bauman & Donskis, 2016), we are posed with a much bigger problematic. Namely that

resilience adds up to an abandonment of ideology in favour of pragmatism – as a ‘capitulation to complexity’ (Pospisil & Kühn, 2016) – one that renders structure negotiated by existing power relations invisible. Weichselgartner and Kelman (2014) however, notes that resilience thinking is taking a turn towards more transformative notions of resilience, which will force it to deal with the notions of equity, power, justice, social capital, and so on. This is important in particular because resilience’s potential is to decrease disparities between those who have/have not, and those who survive/survive not by increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors (Jennison, 2008).

Resilience, as it stands, leaves us with more questions than answers. The concept is significantly under-theorised (Bourbeau, 2013; Brasset et al., 2013), although both academic and practitioner analyses are slowly but surely building up the concept’s resume. The accounts of what resilience amounts to, are quite problematic, even though its use in global policies in the context of humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly, is significant. At the same time, measurement of resilience is not only a technical, but also a political challenge (Prior & Hagmann, 2014), which further problematizes its current widespread use. We now turn to the accounts of practitioners, and how they make sense of resilience in their daily usage of the concept.

## INTERVIEWS WITH RESILIENCE EXPERTS

This chapter presents the results of the key informant interviews. Between April and July 2016, thirteen in-depth semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from various international governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organisations with programmes focused on resilience. From their narratives, four major themes could be identified: the rise of resilience as a concept in policies dealing with (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly, resilience as an answer to contemporary (global) challenges, the characteristics of a resilience approach and what it entails, and finally, the gains and challenges relating to the use of ‘resilience’ as a guiding rationality thus far. These themes will now be discussed.

### 5.1 The rise of resilience

The first major theme concerns the dynamic processes through which resilience has become a prominent concept in current responses to contemporary humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and insecurity. Interviewees shared their perspectives about how and by whom the concept of resilience had been used previously, from whom it received support, the processes through which buzzwords – words that (temporarily) enjoy immense popularity – generally emerge, and the particular appeal of the qualities understood to be inherent to the concept of resilience.

First, interviewees were noticeably united in their assessment that whereas the word resilience itself may not have been used extensively before, the concept does not offer completely new ideas, nor does it represent a mere re-packaging of established practices or ‘old wine in new bottles’. Earlier concepts from the humanitarian and developments fields, like (sustainable) livelihoods, capacity development, and linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) have provided the inspiration for, and the ideas underlying, the concept of resilience. Thus, resilience includes ideas from all these previous concepts, combined into something new. As such, resilience is really understood as being concerned with building on lessons learned and ‘doing business



differently'. There was some disagreement between interviewees however about whether 'doing business differently' meant improving, strengthening and systematising current practices, or that it constitutes an entirely different way of working, as the following excerpts show:

*"It's different actors, it's different commitments, so it's not just... I would argue it's... not just filling a gap between relief and development, doing business very differently means erasing one paradigm and moving on to something else"* (Development Coordinator, inter-governmental organisation, interview 1).

*"...it's not necessarily new, it's about improving ... and building ... on the good things that have been done, because there's a lot of good things that have happened. So, it's building on those things and building on the lessons that we've learned ... so it's ... much more about the strengthening of the way in which we're working"* (Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 13).

This divide seems to refer to resilience as a 'new' rationality underlying governance (hence the word 'paradigm') on the one hand, and, in more practical terms, to resilience as a technical approach, or a 'way of working'. This may then add up to resilience being a strengthening of current practices guided by what is considered a 'new' or different way of thinking, albeit inspired by previous theory and practice.

Interviewees could nevertheless point to particular organisations within the international community or specific influential reports that have brought resilience to the fore. Almost all interviewees explicitly mentioned the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and its *Humanitarian Response Review* of 2011, and, albeit to a lesser extent, the work on resilience done by the European Commission and the United Nations, as having played a role in resilience's rise to the global political agenda.

Second, interviewees asserted that not only was resilience supported by politicians from donor governments and western-based (inter-governmental) donor organisations, politicians and policymakers were also resilience's biggest advocates. The following quote illustrates this by showing at what level the word 'resilience' is used:

*"...it suited governments, it suited the kind of language ... good... for political terms, for politicians, for people like ... the top-ranking bureaucrats, and ... the UN .... And you see it being repeated all the time, I mean ..., Obama was giving a speech ... two or three weeks ago, and it had the word resilience all over it"* (Independent Consultant, inter-governmental organisation, interview 4).

Some interviewees nevertheless added concerns about high-level government officials' unequivocal support for resilience, noticing that inquiries into resilience focused on the technical details of its implementation, rather than the idea as a strategy itself:

*“...sometimes I have the feeling in the policy debate resilience isn’t even questioned, it’s just like, this is a great thing, it’s out there, we need to implement it, resilience has to be done ... The question is rather ... how is it implemented in a way that ... allows ... for the best possible outcome”* (Senior Researcher, independent research institute, interview 10).

Third, almost all interviewees saw resilience as a buzzword, and in their understanding of how resilience arrived at its contemporary popularity, many referred to processes that may not be specific to resilience, but rather to the emergence of buzzwords in general. The most important of these is a so-called ‘bandwagon effect’ – the phenomenon in which the uptake of beliefs, ideas, and words increases the more they are adopted by others. Interviewees explained that once heads of state and donors started talking about resilience – from where the primary push for resilience originated – NGOs were then compelled to follow by adopting the term in order for their projects to be funded, as the following quotes illustrate:

*“At one point, everyone was talking about resilience. Very quickly. So, if you wanted to be in, if you wanted to count, if you wanted to show the language, that you are relevant, you couldn’t refrain from using the word”* (Head of Programme, think tank, interview 7 [Translated from Dutch]).

*“...it’s a term that ... certainly two, three years ago was ... super high on everyone’s agenda, and no project proposal would ever be funded by anyone without the word resilience in it”* (Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 12).

Most interviewees seemed not very critical of these processes, but seemed to resign themselves to the fact that organisations have to adhere to donor demands, that this is just ‘the way it is’. At the same time, interviewees also recognised a certain element of chance or randomness that is perceived to play a role in how buzzwords come into currency. Some interviewees asserted that we might have ended up with a word other than resilience, even if the ideas underlying a new approach would have been the same. One interviewee even referred to the butterfly effect – the idea that small causes may have immense effects:

*“...there’s this thing about the butterfly... you know, what I’m talking about, if the butterfly hadn’t flapped its wings it wouldn’t have been, I think there’s some of that going on. Because that’s the way the world works, if one person hadn’t said something in one room to one person ... we might have ended up with a different word”* (Research fellow, think tank, Expert interview 8).

*“It might as well have been another term. If ‘livelihoods’ hadn’t been used before, perhaps that would have become the new buzzword”* (Head of Programme, think tank, interview 7 [Translated from Dutch]).

These excerpts imply that interviewees ascribe more value to the ideas underlying a buzzword than the buzzword itself. That may nevertheless be problematic, if the underlying ideas differ per organisations, government, and so on, especially when a buzzword is meant to streamline cross-cutting issues over various sectors and fields.

Finally, and not unimportantly, the concept of resilience is understood to have an undeniable appeal that has sparked its sudden and sharp increase in popularity among a wide variety of actors. Interviewees first of all referred to the intrinsic positivity of the term: it is solution-focused and forward-looking rather than problem-focused and backward-looking. Interviewees were quick to ascertain that this is not to say that in practice, resilience ignores the underlying causes of crises, a critique that will be further explored in section 4 of this chapter. One interviewee, in comparing resilience to the concept of fragility, summed up that particular elements within the concept of resilience may appeal to different actors:

*“...on the donor-side ... it’s attractive because it intuitively makes sense, and it feeds into value for money, on the recipient country side ... it’s ... forward-looking and it’s positive ... rather than [fragility, which is] sort of backward-looking ... and maybe has an overlay of potential blame”* (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation interview 11).

In addition to its perceived inherent positivity, there is an assumed element of logic in the concept of resilience. Not only in terms of cost-effectiveness (which will be further explored in section 3 of this chapter), but primarily because resilience is about improving responses to crises – natural disasters, violent conflict, terrorist attacks, and so on:

*“I will sit in my little village and think about how do we develop, how do we live better lives? How do we deal with the next drought? It’s a very legitimate concern ... The concern is legitimate, the approach is legitimate, and it actually touches on some basic human needs ... Homo sapiens ... are designed a little bit to deal with issues and overcome the issues and move on with their lives. You ... have an animal facing you, you run, your body’s designed to produce adrenaline to make you run faster, so you escape the animal that’s chasing you ... so to some degree it’s even built into our DNA, this idea of we want a better life and we want to be able to deal with whatever life throws our way”* (Independent Consultant, inter-governmental organisation, interview 4).

In the excerpt above, resilience is compared to, or explained to play into, an evolutionary logic, seemingly used to legitimise its rationality as an approach to crises.

## 5.2 Resilience as an answer to contemporary challenges

The second major theme concerns the contemporary challenges to which resilience is understood to be an answer. As such, the concept can be understood as, on the one hand a specific technical approach to deal with what are understood to be the global challenges of our time, i.e., a particular understanding of protracted crises, while on the other hand a strategy to address the intrinsic weakness of the current international security, humanitarian, and development system through which protracted crises are addressed.

The first challenge pertains to how institutions, organisations, communities, and individuals involved in the global governance of protracted crises understand the nature of contemporary fragile contexts. In essence, interviewees understood contemporary crises to be somehow different from crises in the past, with regards to their temporality (frequency, duration, recurrence) and their complexity:

*“...the nature of crises has changed whereby ... crises don’t end anymore, in a way. Once they’re open, they’re open, and they stay open and they expand, and what not. Becoming much more entrenched and political ... and protracted”* (Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 12).

Moreover, some interviewees touched upon the idea of contemporary crises’ normalcy – the view that instead of perceiving crisis as an abnormal event, it is seen as a normal part of life, i.e. that crises will happen inevitably:

*“...shocks and stressors [are] being seen as outside the normal development progression rather than being seen as actually you know, a normal part of life ... And then I think when we do that, you start [to] get to a more functional context, rather than a big idea”* (Policy Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 3).

Such a view of crises as inevitable and (also) recurrent, obviously puts a much greater emphasis on the need for preparedness than perhaps has been the case before.

When discussing the nature of contemporary crises, interviewees repeatedly referred to the significant growth of humanitarian needs over the last decade and the sheer overload of cases. This has subsequently sparked a reflection on the second theme; the effectiveness, sustainability, and appropriateness of the current international system. Indeed, our altered understanding of contemporary crises has exposed the intrinsic weaknesses of the international system’s global governance of protracted crises, including, but not limited to, a lack of progress in terms of outcomes, the exclusion of national actors, siloed financial structures that are ill-fitted to catering to contemporary humanitarian needs and perhaps most importantly, the humanitarian-development nexus. The acknowledgement of these systemic weaknesses, has ushered security, humanitarian, and development actors to look for more effective ways of working, and working together.

First, interviewees were critical of the current international aid system and questioned it either in its entirety, or in particular its effectiveness in terms of outcomes:

*“I think at the same time also too, there has been a growing sense [which was expressed during the] World Humanitarian Summit, in May ... that the humanitarian system is sort of increasingly, eh, challenged let’s say, if not broken”* (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 11).

*“...we realise now that we’re getting better as humanitarian actors, but we’re not becoming better in terms of the outcomes. The outcomes are the same, and we have to make sure that we somehow do something different so that the outcome is different as well. So that we can actually can get out of the job in a way”* (Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 12).

Clearly, different actors within the international system view these systemic challenges in varying degrees of pessimism, but there nevertheless existed a general sense among interviewees that aid and assistance has not helped people become less vulnerable so as to be able to respond to crises resiliently – thus necessitating a different approach. In addition, interviewees questioned the appropriateness of traditional aid objectives, i.e. the provision of the most basic humanitarian services, such as shelter, food, and water:

*“[In a refugee camp] you’re not allowed [to work], you’re not allowed to trade your skills, you’re not only vulnerable by definition, you’re... the international system that’s constructed to keep you vulnerable. After six years to keep you living on a subsistence allowance. So yes, certainly, the resilience response challenges that fundamentally”* (Development Coordinator, inter-governmental organisation, interview 1).

While there is an undeniable need for basic humanitarian services in protracted crises, interviewees perceived these as being largely insufficient, and in the long term possibly detrimental to people’s resilience by creating a passive dependency rather than a proactive resourcefulness. As such, it could be said that insofar resilience is understood to (also) refer to populations’ ability to find solutions for the challenges they face, current international responses like humanitarian aid may actually be counterproductive if the goal is building people’s resilience.

Second, and related to the above, there is a concern that current approaches tend to sidestep national decision-making processes rather than seeing them as central to protracted crises governance. There were slight differences of opinion, where some interviewees emphasised that the international system failed to provide national governments with their rightful place in decision-making processes, and others felt that international organisations rather tended to relieve states of their duties, while appeasing the population and thus providing only temporary solutions that perpetuate rather than solve problems:

*“[International organisations] sometimes take the place of the state [by] providing what the state is supposed to provide. So they allow the state to*

*continue doing whatever it does without accountability ... I think the problem with international organisations is that when [they] start providing services, they pacify the community. And ... it gives [the community] ... immediate solutions to protracted problems. Because, you dig them a well today, they will still have a water problem [tomorrow] so, you [are] just going to dig another well, and [are] just going to create different problems, because ... your solution is a problem in the future” (Senior Programme Officer, non-governmental organisation, interview 2).*

What the current international system entails or ‘does’ is thus perceived as quite problematic in that it does not address issues sustainably, and instead, runs the risk of exacerbating problems rather than solving them.

Third, the current financial structures of the international aid system are perceived as ill-fitted to cater to contemporary humanitarian needs. Interviewees primarily identified a significant need for multi-year humanitarian programming and financing, as well as substantial structural challenges that thwart a move towards longer-term humanitarian financing instruments:

*“USAID for instance has some multi-year humanitarian planning, but for USAID ... to move to multi-year humanitarian financing is almost impossible. Because ... humanitarian financing in the US is requested by congress every year ... through a legislative process, so trying to address that sort of ... I mean it’s really starting to address the architecture of the state ... to change that, so it’s very difficult” (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 11).*

Finally, next to financial structures, the major perceived weakness of the current international system was the so-called ‘humanitarian-development nexus’: the fact that relief aid and development assistance are ideologically, institutionally, and functionally two completely separate worlds that rarely seem to interact (which applies to other fields as well, such as security). This nexus is dramatically illustrated by the following quote:

*“...for the first time we had to sit at the same table with the humanitarians, and they had to explain to us the kind of work that they do. And we had to explain to them the kind of work that we do, and ... we were both quite alien to each other, I mean, it was interesting, and we learned a lot. But we exist in two different spheres” (Independent Consultant, inter-governmental organisation, interview 4).*

With contemporary crises understood as being longer-term and increasingly complex, humanitarian organisations – which traditionally provide immediate, short-term lifesaving services – in particular, will find their tools insufficient for their necessary long-term presence:

*“...the humanitarian tools and services that we have that are really for short-term surge ... they’re not really working for long-term presence. So, again, in a case like Dadaab [refugee camp in Kenya] we’ve been there for 25 years but a lot of the tools that we’re using are single-year fundraising, single-year contracts for the staff who are running it, it’s single-year everything” (Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 12).*

*“...in those protracted crises, I think the humanitarian system has been pushed into taking on roles that it was not necessarily designed to do. I mean, the humanitarian system was designed as really a six-week response mechanism ... the humanitarian system is now in the situation where it is expected pretty much to provide parallel service provision to people who are displaced on average now for seventeen years. So you’re talking about generational service provision. Which is being provided by a system, that was not set up to do that, that was set up to provide immediate relief, meet immediate needs, and then hand over, if you like, to the development system or to the national... development system more broadly, and by development system, I mean international assistance, or government, or private sector ... and that hasn’t happened in protracted crises, in particular” (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 11).*

These interview excerpts address a deep problematic specific to the humanitarian relief arm of international protracted crisis governance, which is its short-term approach and mechanisms for what is increasingly becoming long-term work. Interviewees brought to the fore that protracted crises in particular, due to their nature, necessitate certain forms of cooperation between humanitarian actors, i.e. the shorter-term relief work that addresses immediate needs, and development actors, i.e. longer-term work that addresses the (political) drivers of vulnerability, because:

*“...why they’re saying that the aid system is broken, [is] because all these different parts are not working well together to be able to reduce the overall needs” (Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 12).*

The interview narratives indicate that whereas humanitarian and development work have always been separated, over the last decade or so this has become not only problematic, but has also become to be perceived as one of the main reasons for populations’ sustained vulnerability and regions’ continued and increasing fragility. Perhaps surprisingly, specific challenges relating to the cooperation with or between other actors, such as security actors (e.g., peacekeeping missions) or the private sector were not explicitly mentioned. Nevertheless, whichever form humanitarian-development cooperation should take, is further discussed in the next section.

### 5.3 The resilience approach

The third major theme concerns interviewees' perceptions of what the concept of resilience actually 'does' in practice. What does a 'resilience approach' or even resilience-based governance mean in practice? According to the interviewees, a resilience approach can be characterised by a number of characteristics, and by a specific form of humanitarian-development in particular.

First of all, an important aspect of the resilience approach is the realisation that humanitarian relief and development are not linear processes – i.e., relief and development phases do not follow each other in a linear fashion. Reality is messier than that. Exactly because protracted crises are complex, recurrent and long-term, a sequenced approach might not be appropriate, and instead, a combination of relief, rehabilitation and development activities should occur simultaneously, in a so-called 'contiguum' rather than a continuum approach:

*"...we have learned some critical lessons, so, one for example is that it's not, you know, a continuum, it's a contiguum, and it's a very much a ... back and forth, it's not just relief leads to recovery leads to development, it's much more complex than that and it's about having development and humanitarian at the same time, in the same places, targeting the same people"* (Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 13).

As such, insofar as current approaches are supposed to take place along a relief-development-recovery continuum, more recent understanding is that the context or reality on the ground – i.e., the protracted crisis – demands a more iterative approach in which relief, development and recovery phases overlap. It is not impossible that in practice, this is already happening as exact points at which one phase ends and the next begins may be difficult to determine.

In addition, resilience approaches tend to focus explicitly on the poorest and most vulnerable members of populations affected by protracted crises – corresponding to the battle cry 'leave no one behind' of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and the 'furthest behind first' anthem of the Sustainable Development Goals. The idea underlying this focus on the most vulnerable, seems to be, according to the interviewees, the perceived necessity for establishing a strong baseline, so that those who are at risk do not descend into crises but rather have the capacities to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of adversity.

*"...if you think of emergency people as being the people who deal with people who've fallen off the edge, then ... the development people really need to be talking to them, to find out who falls over the edge, when, why, and where the edge is"* (Expert interview 8).

The idea is that a hazard – whether climate-related, or a state's fragility – only leads to crisis if the population are vulnerable. For example, rising water levels only become a flood in the absence of adequate embankments, and a flood only becomes a crisis if the



communities affected by it are not adequately prepared to deal with flooding. Undoubtedly, situations of political violence and armed conflict are different and likely to be much more complex. But it might similarly be possible to mitigate some of the effects of violence, by establishing a stronger baseline. For example, initiatives that promote equality may have some leverage over ethnic tensions.

Next, a resilience approach was considered to have a strong focus on context-specificity. Programmes must not only be tailored to what the context requires, but also acknowledge as well as build on existing local capacities, as the quote below shows:

*“...the resilience discussion, from our perspective, strongly focuses on the aspect of endogenous local capacities that are often not recognised, which are suppressed, where also political structures in countries in which the situation is deteriorating, are suppressed. A fairly strong focus of the resilience message is actually, be very aware of everything that you could actually support from the bottom up”* (Head of Programme, think tank, interview 7 [Translated from Dutch]).

Related to the above, interviewees asserted that resilience recognises the need for responding to crises in a multi-disciplinary manner and the involvement of a wide variety of actors – including for example the national and international private sector in public-private partnerships. Importantly, the specific context is understood as demanding an inter-disciplinary approach. Moreover, rather than to address humanitarian needs in isolation, these different actors have to work together in a coordinated fashion in order to reduce overall needs.

Secondly, when discussing the characteristics of a resilience approach, interviewees specifically talked about cooperation between humanitarian and development actors. Whereas some interviewees used the word ‘integration’, others were particularly wary of using this term:

*“...it’s about driving them to work in the same space, at the same time, on the basis of their respective comparative advantage ... it’s not about ... the closer integration or the merging ... of development and humanitarian action, because it’s not. And it shouldn’t be”* (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 11).

*“What we like to say is, by no means should we be having a joint action, but we should be having a joint-up action. And by that we mean that ... we are fully abreast of what each other is doing, and we make sure that we’re all rowing in the same direction, we all each have our own different roles on this journey”* (Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 12).

As such, whereas the institutional, ideological and functional divide between humanitarian relief and development assistance was identified as a major weakness, integrating them is not seen as the answer to this problem per se. Interviewees claimed that the complex nature of protracted crises has pushed humanitarian actors in particular

to take on roles that are not only outside their mandate, but also for which they lack the capacity and skillsets: namely, addressing the underlying reasons for vulnerability. Rather than integration of relief and development work, a resilience approach seems to be about the effective coordination of relief and development so that all actors present can work towards a common goal:

*“I don’t think it is about integration ... I think it is about ensuring that the humanitarians can do what the system was designed to do, which is principled humanitarian action that meets immediate ... humanitarian needs ... and the development community can work on the longer term crisis drivers and the longer term ... development and well-being ... issues associated with vulnerable communities. So if anything, rather than integration, it probably is about reframing these ... sets of work maybe a bit more strongly than they have been over the past ten years. Because what we’ve seen over the last ten years is a bleeding of these boundaries, because the humanitarian community has had to pick up so much of this work. So it’s not about integration, it’s actually almost about, about re-instating ... the comparative advantage if you like, of these two ... sectors” (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 11).*

According to interviewees, humanitarian-development cooperation or coordination carries with it an acknowledgement that populations affected by protracted crises need both relief aid and development assistance. Whereas humanitarian and development workers both have a different and unique skillset, a resilience approach requires a (stronger) delineation for relief aid and development assistance organisations’ roles, which would allow them to work according to their comparative advantages, making the overall response more effective and efficient. Having said that, humanitarian-development cooperation notably includes conducting joint-up risk analyses and having a common strategy – that is, in particular, designing short-term goals by reference to long-term goals, as the following interviewee explains:

*“...there has to be a shared or joint analysis to begin with. You know, we have to be... agreeing on what it is that the... that the current situation is like, right now, we have to agree that this is the scenario, and, we also have to agree ... that we have to work together towards common targets. Which is why having collective outcomes or collective goals is really important. Now, what we do ... between that, has to be a play towards strength. So, you know, we’re not gonna ask humanitarian agencies to start building bridges or to start doing governance exercises, that will still remain the remit of the development, but we have to make sure that if we as the humanitarians have to say you know what, the health sector needs the biggest amount of help here because it can make the, the most dramatic eh, improvement in health that will reduce humanitarian needs, then, the development sector could take that into account and make sure that they do ... the capacity building ...*

*on the ministry of health side” (Officer, inter-governmental organisation, interview 12).*

*“[resilience is] to drive development actors into this [same] space so that the humanitarians can really sort of better frame their work around immediate humanitarian needs, and their development counterparts can take on the burden if you like, of working on the crisis drivers that exist in those contexts, and the longer term human needs” (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 11).*

The excerpts above clearly illustrate how humanitarian-development cooperation is not about integration, but rather about a clearer delineation of complementary roles. Indeed, this also demonstrates an appreciation of what both sets of actors can contribute in situations of crisis, as illustrated by the following quote wherein humanitarians acknowledge the important role of their development counterparts:

*“...there’s a huge focus on humanitarians but ... one of the most critical things that ... can actually translate into actual changes for people in terms of building their resilience, is all ... by development partners ... it’s happening in places, it’s even happening in certain areas of South Sudan. But ... that definitely requires them to be less risk averse ... and to actually make that a priority, to help people in areas of crisis ... with the sort of medium to longer-term assistance that is required to help ... wean them off of humanitarian assistance” (Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 13).*

In sum, although a ‘resilience-based approach’ can be characterised by an interdisciplinary set of actors whose contiguous context-specific programmes are focused on the most vulnerable members of a conflict-affected society, resilience is also strongly characterised by a recognition of the *complementarity* of in particular humanitarian and development actors.

## **5.4 Gains and challenges**

The fourth and final major theme concerns what interviewees felt the international community has gained from resilience thus far, and what the remaining challenges around the use of this concept in policies of protracted crises governance are.

With regards to resilience’s ‘achievements’ thus far, interviewees spoke primarily about how resilience and its underlying set of ideas has produced some tangible changes in the thought and practices around protracted crises, most notably how it has fulfilled the role of convening mechanism in bringing different actors together. Interviewees asserted that as a concept, resilience provides us with a common ground for engagement – a so-called ‘common language’ or ‘lingua franca’ that allows actors from different contexts to engage with one another despite their divergent frames of reference:

*“...resilience has been useful as a convening term ... and as a shorthand, for some of the changes that are needed to the way in which people work, to make the programming smarter if you like” (Policy Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 11).*

The common language argument could nevertheless be used for a multitude of other buzzwords, yet interviewees maintained that as opposed to other buzzwords, resilience has really made tangible changes in the way that organizations work, as the following quotes illustrate:

*“Resilience helped open the shutters, and to say yes, besides our own activities there are a lot of other important issues to address if you want to work holistically. To do so, we have to work together with other organizations. Especially with regards to partnering up with other organizations, resilience really helped. And for an organisation like ours, which is used to working primarily within its own structures—that is a substantial change” (Programme Manager, governmental organisation interview 6 [Translated from Dutch]).*

*“...something about what it means and represents ... has brought about much more tangible practical changes at the field level than ever before ... from where I sit, I see a lot of efforts being done, like new things or people trying things ... much more than before. And before ... like the whole discussion around LRRD [Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development] and everything, it was often [that] it stayed at that policy theoretical level, it stayed at that global level and it never necessarily ended up meaning anything for ... field staff ... what I’ve been seeing – at least from the humanitarian side ... just the amount of stuff that they are trying to do ... to make this work! And they’re not all doing it in the same way, you know, they’re all trying from different perspectives” (Advisor, inter-governmental organisation, interview 13).*

As such, resilience seems to have ‘opened up’ organisations, by providing the means to engage with a wide variety of actors. Notwithstanding this important gain, resilience also introduces significant challenges. First of these being that every organisation has its own definition and understanding of resilience: there is no single, agreed-upon definition. Some interviewees attribute this to the concept still being ill-defined and poorly understood, whereas others understand it as a natural consequence of a concept that has to refer to a subject and a context, before its meaning can be properly interpreted:

*“I think it’s natural ... resilience... fundamentally is a very context specific characteristic of systems. And so, those systems should determine what that characteristic looks like” (Head of Research Team, research centre, interview 5).*

*“I think it’s become sort of, this... sexy word with donors, so it’s always plugged in, but nobody knows exactly what it is. Or how their project exactly fits into resilience... but I’m not sure that there is an acceptable definition. At [ORGANISATION] we sort of created our own understanding, that’s how we understand it, for our purposes, and that’s how we want to work towards it... to advocate for it... but I think, other organisations will have different views on... depending on their goal, their end goal” (Senior Programme Officer, international non-governmental organisation, interview 2).*

Indeed, interviewees acknowledged that whereas in abstraction resilience may have little meaning, the concept derives its meaning from asking ‘resilience to what?’, ‘resilience of whom?’, and ‘resilience by what means?’

*“Resilience of what? To what? When, and where? Are we talking about resilience [at] the macro-level? Are we talking about resilience of state structures or the economy as a whole? Or, the resilience of the village, or resilience of the community, or resilience of your household ... And resilience to what exactly? Because ... our resilience to climate change takes a totally different kind of operation than the resilience to a banking crisis for example ... and the word resilience applies perfectly to both” (Independent Consultant, inter-governmental organisation, interview 4).*

*“... it doesn’t tell you anything about what to do. It gives you some questions to ask. That’s... what it does. Resilience gives you some questions to ask” (Research Fellow, think tank, interview 8).*

The ideas illustrated by these quotes seem to imply that ‘resilience’ is an adjective wrongly understood to be a noun, which suggests that it refers to a characteristic feature of a system’s or individual’s response to crisis rather than the act of responding as such. Understandably, resilience thus remains difficult to define. It should thus come as no surprise that measurement was a common challenge mentioned by almost all interviewees, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

*“We know for which topics we want to lobby ... we know who the stakeholders are, we know the change we want, but how do you measure that? And how do you know at certain points that you are still on track, whether it is still useful what you are doing? We still have to learn how to get better at that. So it is an ongoing debate, I cannot give you an answer as to how far along we are with regards to measurement, but I can tell you how difficult it is” (Programme Manager, governmental organisation, interview 6 [Translated from Dutch]).*

*“...we still are struggling with the measurement of resilience. I don’t want to enter too much in the technical part, but it has been a long and huge debate among research hub, academic, UN agencies and donors, to... think of a single mechanism a single methodology, to ... agree on how to measure*

*resilience. And we are in 2016, we still don't have it"* (Thematic Coordinator, inter-governmental organisation, interview 9).

Besides conceptual and measurement challenges, resilience, understood as an approach that employs a particular, coordinated form of relief aid and development assistance cooperation, also brings with it certain more practical challenges. A notable challenge mentioned by interviewees concerned humanitarians' fear of aid politicization. Since development partners work with host governments, humanitarians fear the endangerment of their principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence if they steer towards a closer collaboration with their development counterparts. This however, assumes both parties welcome a closer collaboration. Whereas most interviewees were positive about the idea of humanitarian-development cooperation, some explicitly cautioned against possible differences of opinion. As the excerpt below illustrates, there may be humanitarian organisations that feel that resilience concerns the longer-term, structural work, and would thus does not fall within their mandate:

*"...to me, building resilience is ... long-term, you can't do it [in] 6 months ... so therefore it's not emergency, it's [not] in the domain of emergency people to do, to worry about. It's in the domain of development, because it's long-term and it's structural and you've got to address that. And that is what we call ... development. I mean it's probably not a great word, but you know, if you talk about a development emergency divide, [resilience is] on the development side"* (Research Fellow, think tank, interview 8).

The above implies that if a resilience approach is to be successful in reducing vulnerability, not only do development actors need to be convinced that protracted crises fall within their mandate, humanitarians must also be convinced that resilience work is part of their duty. These challenges nevertheless illustrate that not everyone within the humanitarian or development community sees working more closely together as a solution to their contemporary challenges.

# CHAPTER 6

## DISCUSSION

Taken together, the academic debates on resilience and practitioners' understanding of the concept converge around a number of themes, although approaches to the identified themes differ, sometimes substantially.

First, the results of this study indicate that resilience is clearly a response to external conditions, first and foremost a radically different understanding of contemporary risks and crises. In the literature, crises are perceived to have been reconceptualised as inevitable and unknowable, ascribing responsibility for its effects to the vulnerabilities of society. Rather than inevitable and unknowable, practitioners emphasise that crises are recurrent and protracted, i.e. stretched in time and inherently complex. Their perception seems to be that crises are increasingly more difficult to address. In contrast to the past, contemporary crises simply 'do not end anymore', with the result that short-term emergency actors' presence is required on a long-term basis. Practitioners helplessly watch humanitarian needs grow bigger each year, painfully aware that they do not have the funds, manpower or structures to address them. Importantly, practitioners also see resilience as an answer to their own internal challenges, not just the sheer overload of cases. They are confronted with the fact that the system within which they work cannot effectively respond to today's crises, and that the activities that are now seen as necessary due to a renewed understanding of crises, do not fit within existing structures. This has prompted a radical self-reflection that has culminated in a perceived need for self-transformation. This concerns in particular the need for joint-up efforts between the humanitarian and development arm of the international community, which have traditionally been separated on the basis of their ideological, functional, and institutional differences.

Second, there is a clear difference in understanding between scholars and practitioners with regards to what resilience 'does' in practice. The academic literature focuses on resilience as decentralization, which has worried some that resilience adds up to a neoliberal abdication of responsibilities and a rationale for cutting budgets in times of austerity. Here, debates around resilience closely resemble those around the paradigm shift within security towards risk-based thinking, characterised by risk, anticipation, and prevention (Johnston & Shearing, 2003). Counterarguments point in particular to the wider range of meanings that resilience has, aside from the state transferring the

responsibility for security to citizens. Authors also question how much responsibility the state is willing to give away, considering desired behaviours (i.e. resilient behaviour) are often prescribed in emergency protocols – signalling a contradiction inherent to the regulation of emergent behaviours.

Practitioners understand resilience in a much more pragmatic sense, and have tried to answer what ‘doing resilience’ actually means in practice. According to these accounts, resilience has a significant focus on affected people’s capacities, greater local ownership and the need to build on existing structures – much like the existing literature and work around capacity development. The 2015 *Dead Sea Resilience Agenda* for example, emphasises in one of its five core principles that resilience has to reinforce rather than replace local capacities. Likewise, the EU *Approach to Resilience* (2012) emphasises that “Resilience can only be built bottom-up. The starting point for the EU approach to resilience therefore is a firm recognition of the leading role of partner countries” (p. 11), and the *Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan* (3RP) emphasises that it differs from previous regional response plans because it focuses on “strengthening national ownership and ensuring alignment to national and local development planning frameworks” (p. 4). As such, whereas critical scholarship seems to focus on the negative implications of ‘responsibilisation’, practitioners emphasise the empowerment inherent to increased local ownership and inclusion.

At face value, that seems much like decentralisation and assigning more responsibility to the locale. Yet if we are allowed the freedom to, for a moment, liken the international community to a state, resilience is much less about rolling back government, but rather, about capitalising on what already exists locally, while responsibility remains with the ‘state’, i.e. international actors. This has also been referred to as a state that steers (i.e. providing guidance, direction), while delegating the task of ‘rowing’ to others (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Indeed, it is often said that humanitarian and development actors should ‘do more’ rather than less. Resilience, more than anything, means combining the strengths of humanitarian and development actors, which can hardly refer to a dissemination of governance. This might be due in part because the subject on the other end of humanitarian relief or development assistance, is still regarded primarily as vulnerable – illustrated by the apparent belief that resilience also means a stronger focus on ‘the most vulnerable’ so that no-one is left behind as per World Humanitarian Summit creed. It therefore seems unlikely that the focus on resilience will mean that affected people will be more meaningfully involved in emergency response, considering a vulnerability framing tends to take agency away rather than grant it. As such, this indicates a gap between the political rhetoric of resilience and how it does and does not play out in practice. It is nevertheless important to note that resilience and the responsibility for self-protection has been explicitly resisted by some disaster-affected communities. A New Orleans pamphlet circulated at the 10-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina read: “Stop calling me resilient. Because every time you say, ‘Oh, they’re resilient’ that means you can do something else to me. I am not resilient.” (Brown, 2016, p.191).



The New Orleans notice critiques the shift of the burden of recovery onto individuals and communities themselves, implying that “if communities are resilient, then they can absorb shocks and do not need protection” (Brown, 2016, p. 191). Whereas dysfunction may be more uncommon than previously assumed, resilience may also be indicative of a ‘romanticisation’ of local capacities (Mac Ginty, 2014). In relation to man-made disasters, resilience, after all, reveals its limits: who is resilient against nuclear warfare, or even the sudden escalation of ethnic violence as during the genocide in Rwanda, in which a significant part of the population was murdered with machetes over just a three-day period?

Third, scholars have problematized the reconstruction of exposure to adversity as ‘opportunity’ and resilient functioning as a ‘learnable skill’, in which resilience risks becoming a neo-Darwinist measure of the fitness to survive. Particularly unsettling is that when adaptation becomes a virtue, the moral basis for social security disappears. Moreover, an exposure-as-opportunity governance model would probably make the existence of social security become financially impossible. Along the same lines, scholars have indicated that if resilience is learnable, it can also be failed to learn, de facto responsabilising people for not only their resilience but also their vulnerabilities – rendering invisible the structural factors that limit individuals’ agency and (at least partly) define their vulnerabilities. Indeed, a number of authors explicitly ask why these issues (e.g. poverty, inequality) are absent from debates around resilience (see for example Bulley, 2013). The question is whether and why resilience intentionally wards off challenges to the systems and institutions in which individuals are located, and scholarly interrogation of these controversies is urgent.

Practitioners seem to be divided as with regards to the possible de-politicisation of a resilience approach. Whereas some have pointed to a disconnect between academic debates and the ‘reality on the ground’, few others recognise this danger inherent to the concept. One interviewee in particular stressed that resilience continues an already-existing trend in which states are absolved from their responsibilities, facilitated by NGOs that take their place in providing essential services. In the end, this results in unsustainable solutions, because citizens should be able to demand services from their governments rather than external parties. Practitioners do worry however, that from a moral perspective, the call to see crises as opportunities cannot be communicated to people who have lost everything,

Fourth, both scholars and practitioners see resilience as a ‘lingua franca’ that provides a common platform for engagement between different kind of actors, cutting across sectoral and disciplinary boundaries. Here, the expert interviews have undoubtedly substantiated the scholarly debate, providing various examples of what this ‘lingua franca’ does in practice. In short, it seems that resilience has enabled organisations to open up to partnerships with different actors, as if resilience has helped them realise working together is crucial to success. Practically however, this will be anything but easy, and not just because of the significantly different institutional structures. Collaboration between humanitarian and development partners in particular is seen as

highly problematic, and moreover, not accepted by all. Médecins sans Frontières for example, walked out of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016 with the explicit message that they were not a development organisation. About their walk-out, they publicly stated their disapproval of “the WHS’s focus [that] would seem to be an incorporation of humanitarian assistance into a broader development and resilience agenda” (MSF, 2016, para. 3). This indicates a further need to (re)align the goals and expectations that exist at either side of this ‘humanitarian-development nexus’. The EU’s SHARE and AGIR initiatives are generally regarded as testing grounds for humanitarian–development cooperation (Joseph, 2014), but it remains to be seen what lessons learned emerge from these.

Finally, both scholars and practitioners attest to resilience’s omnipresence in (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly. It may be clear by now that resilience’s context and issue-specificity – illustrated by the fact that it prompts questions of resilience to what, of whom, and so on – relieves much of the conceptual ambiguity, but it does not answer many of the questions that resilience leaves us with, for example whether resilience *should* be accepted as a governance rationality. Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue that it is exactly buzzwords’ “propensity to shelter multiple meanings [that] makes them politically expedient, shielding those who use them from attack by lending the possibility of common meaning to extremely disparate actors” (p. 1056). In other words, resilience’s ambiguity and ‘lingua franca’ properties may be one of the reasons it became, and is still, so popular. The practitioner accounts most effectively show how resilience rose to prominence through multiple parallel dynamic processes, including a ‘bandwagon effect’ where the use of the term by governments and donors pushes adoption by lower-level agencies and organisations. Périn and Attaran (2003) describe a similar top-down process in which donor ideology is the primarily determinant of how international aid is spent. Of course there is a strong pragmatic argument for adopting donor ideologies, where – put simply, organisation’s financial support and organisational survival depends on it. This culminates, however, in the uncritical adoption of resilience, illustrated by the fact that discussions revolve around *how* to implement resilience, rather than *should* we implement resilience. This tendency is also reflected in this study, where scholarly engagement with resilience is a critical investigation into the meaning of the concept, whereas practitioners are more concerned with the technical application of the donors’ next buzzword.

This may be illustrative of a common ideological reinforcement mechanism, where discussions are focused “on the means employed to achieve the supposedly altruistic ends claimed by those in power, instead of asking whether the proclaimed aims are the real ones, or whether those pursuing them have the right to do so [emphasis in original]” (Bricmont, 2006, p. 32). Humanitarian and development organisations may not feel powerful opposite governments and international donor agencies, but need nevertheless remain aware that in the eyes of conflict-affected individuals, communities, and societies, they are, indeed, the ones with power.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to critically explore the concept of resilience as it relates to governance rationalities underlying (international) responses to humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security more broadly. This work was important because despite resilience's omnipresence in the international policy arena, the concept remains contested. In order to advance current understandings of resilience as it relates to the world's fragile contexts characterised by political violence and armed conflict, this study reviewed the existing academic debates on resilience from various disciplines, such as political science, international relations, security studies, development studies etc., and combined this with an exploration of the opinions and perceptions of resilience experts in the field, with diverse professional experiences across a range of international development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding organisations at the governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental level.

The results of this study allow for a better understanding of where the debate on resilience stands, and what 'resilience' actually means in the context of (inter)national responses to insecurity due to political violence and armed conflict. In our understanding, resilience is an unfinished concept that refers primarily to a certain interpretation of the world, logically followed by a particular normative construction of subjects and their responses to emerging insecurity. A more interesting question is however, whether resilience *should* be adopted as a principle for organising international efforts. Essentially, the answer to this question rests squarely on whether 'resilience' could become a driver for effective, appropriate and acceptable programmes for peoples affected by insecurity.

First and foremost, local people – whether European publics faced with the threat of terrorism, or persons forced to live in refugee and displaced persons camps in Africa or the Middle East – have to be meaningfully included, not just in the implementation of programmes that target them, but also in the *design* of international responses. Inclusion is not only a moral obligation, it is also crucial to any endeavour's effectiveness, appropriateness and acceptability – and hence, its success. Resilience, with its inherent emphasis on the affected person's or community's capabilities, has the *potential* to steer towards inclusive, bottom-up and context-informed responses, albeit the results of this study imply that this potential is currently not or under-utilised. The current conception

of conflict-affected populations is still a disempowering one of victims and vulnerability. On a more positive note, ‘victimisation’ as a term also points towards ‘a right to assistance’, and as such, it should be complemented with the strengths that communities possess, not only in terms of existing structures, but also of being ‘survivors’ and ‘first responders’. Discouragingly, resilience’s current conceptualisation of populations affected by insecurity is one of ‘the *most* vulnerable’; communities of victims that possess structures that could be built upon – seemingly without an explicit awareness that this could potentially result in the indiscriminate reinforcement of local power relations. A similarly disempowering notion of inclusion could possibly culminate in the tokenistic employment of local people in humanitarian or development operations, defined by their exclusion when it comes to employment benefits and evacuation in case of immediate danger. Instead, resilience and inclusion should refer to peoples that are *both* victims and survivors, *both* vulnerable and resilient. It should refer to peoples not only with a right to assistance, but also with a right to shape the form of that assistance, much like a client determines the services it procures, rather than that these are shaped by the service *provider*.

Second, there have been noteworthy efforts towards theorising resilience. Many of these theories, although incomplete, imply that resilience is complicit in the erasure of the system structures within which social life is embedded, including the shocks that tear life apart. This is worrying – in particular because of the rapid and widespread uptake of resilience and similar ideologies into (international) policies. If resilience indeed compels us to understand crises as inevitable, thus discouraging any interrogation into the structures upon which this reality is built (e.g., global inequality), we are undeniably facing some sort of ‘political death’ – exactly because resilience advocates for adaptation within the structure rather than structural change. Moreover, (international) efforts based on this principle can never result in effective, appropriate and acceptable responses to international insecurity, because they fail to address their flawed, if not broken, foundations. Indeed, if we truly want to build resilience in the most basic sense of the word, i.e., to build societies’ ability to absorb shocks, adapt to changing realities, and transform in order to function better, it is absolutely crucial to interrogate the underlying structures that directly or indirectly generate crises.

Finally, ‘resilience’ clearly indicates that there is a stark contrast between past and present understandings of social reality. Across fields and disciplines, there is an almost constant reference to how the contemporary world is more complex, more interdependent, more unpredictable and protracted than ever before. This indicates a shift away from the principle of simplification (i.e., Occam’s razor) that underlies much of science in general, and implies instead a ‘turn to complexity’. Theorisations of resilience however seem to have taken this to the extreme, constructing a world that is complex to the point where interventions become absurd. Perhaps it is not so much the concept of resilience that is the problem, but rather our contemporary understanding of crises as inevitable and (too) complex, to which resilience is essentially a reaction – rather than that this perception of risks and crises is inherent in the concept. Resilience, then, boils down to the question: ‘Do we shape life, or does life shape us?’

There is some relief in the idea that risk and crises are attributes of society – internal, rather than external to us. Whereas this is one of the primary critiques of resilience (i.e., that individuals/communities are problematized and responsabilised), the argument this study advances is that the internalisation of risks simply has not happened on a deep enough level: it stays at the surface and thus becomes problematic. It could be said that a community in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is *not* at risk of violence because they are situated in an area of conflict mines, or because they lack sustainable livelihoods, or because their community lacks social cohesion – rather, they are at risk fundamentally because of global social structures that reproduce the existence of conflict mines (e.g., the opacity of the global resource trade), poverty (e.g., global inequality), and divisions across sectarian or ethnic lines (e.g., colonial legacies). As such, we should not seek the cause of risks and crises in individuals’ or individual communities’ risk factors, but rather in the deeper structure of the social world as a risk factor in and of itself. If we try to shape life, we may fail, but if we let life shape us, we might end up reinforcing the detrimental effects of the structures we have ourselves created, such as deepening inequalities, growing poverty, and so on.

This is also where we would suggest are avenues for further research; how do we put ‘power’ back into resilience and counter its de-politicising effects? How can we use resilience as a governance rationality for humanitarian emergencies, protracted crises and (in)security, while still addressing questions of power, justice, and equality? Or rather, how can we make addressing power, (in)justice, and (in)equality a prerequisite for building resilience?

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## **Annex A: Interview Guide**

1. Can you first tell me a little bit about your work and to what extent you work with the concept of resilience?
2. In your opinion, what are the most important – and potentially beneficial – aspects of a resilience-based approach?
3. On the other hand, what are sensible critiques on the idea of resilience and where can we still improve?
4. How did resilience get onto the global agenda?
  - a. What particular events pushed policymakers to adopt a resilience-based approach?
  - b. What individuals/organisations pushed for the adoption of a resilience-based approach?
  - c. What role did grassroots organisations play in putting resilience on the global agenda?
5. (Internal frame) In how far does the policy community agree on definitions or operationalisations of resilience?
  - a. If there are any disagreements, how can they be characterised?
6. (External frame) What is it about particular framings of resilience that gets the attention from political leaders and donors?
7. How can we ‘measure’ resilience?
8. What are the so-called ‘active ingredients’ of resilience-building interventions?
  - a. In how far are they evidence-based?
9. Some critical scholars have argued that resilience, in its shift from deficit to asset model, obscures the underlying reasons for vulnerability, and as a result depoliticizes people’s hardships. How would you answer to that?
10. How does resilience relate to a human rights-based approach?
11. Is there anything you would like to add?

## **Annex B: Study Information**

<b>Individuals involved</b>	<b>Institutions involved</b>
Professor Dr Wolfgang Wagner Rosanne Anholt	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam Faculty of Social Sciences Department of Political Science and Public Administration De Boelelaan 1105 1081 HV Amsterdam The Netherlands Website: <a href="http://www.vu.nl">http://www.vu.nl</a>

### **Who is the research team and what is this research about?**

Professor Dr Wolfgang Wagner is professor of international security at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and co-leader of the theme “Europe and the World” in ACCESS Europe. He has published widely on foreign policy analysis, among others in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *Review of International Studies*, *European Political Science Review*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Armed Forces and Society* and *European Security*.

Rosanne Anholt is a recent graduate (Master of Science – International Public Health, 2016) and is currently conducting this study titled ‘Resilience governance of Humanitarian Emergencies’ under supervision of Professor Dr Wagner. The study is accommodated by the Department of Political Science and Public Administration and the Institute for Societal Resilience, at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The objective of this study is to critically explore contemporary resilience governance to humanitarian emergencies by reviewing current debates on resilience from various disciplines (political science, international relations, security studies etc.) and exploring the opinions and perceptions of resilience experts in the field, in order to advance current understanding of the idea of resilience in the context of humanitarian governance of insecurity and conflict. It aims to answer the following research question: ‘How is resilience governance of humanitarian emergencies (insecurity and armed conflict) conceptualised by the various actors in the international community engaged in humanitarian action?’

### **Why do you want to talk to me and what does it involve?**

We have selected you for a key informant interview, because we feel that your professional experience and expertise can contribute much to our understanding of contemporary resilience discourses in the international policy arena, and its implications for the governance of humanitarian emergencies.

In this interview, we would like to ask you for example, how ‘resilience’ came onto the international agenda, and how it is understood by the various actors that employ the concept. If you do not want to answer a question, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. No-one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else there. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to assist later in fully writing up the information. You will not be identified by name on the recording.

**Are there any risks or disadvantages to me of taking part?**

There are no risks of taking part in this study. The interview will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

**Are there any benefits to me of taking part?**

There are no individual benefits to taking part, but in answering our questions you will help us advance our understanding of how the concept of resilience informs the governance of humanitarian emergencies.

**Who will have access to the information I give?**

The research team will not share individual information about you or the other participants with anyone outside the research team. All of our documents/audio recordings are stored securely in the office and on password protected computers. All audio-recordings will be destroyed after the study is finished (August 2016). The knowledge gained from this study will be shared in a research report and possibly a peer-reviewed journal article, without revealing individuals' identities or their respective work settings. All the information you provide, will be completely anonymous.

**What will happen if I refuse to participate?**

All participation in research is voluntary. You are free to decide if you want to take part or not. If you do agree, you can change your mind at any time without any consequences. You will not be asked any questions about why you no longer want to participate.

**What if I have any questions?**

You are free to ask any question about this study at any time. If you have any further questions about the study, you are free to contact any member of the research team using the contacts below:

**Rosanne Anholt**

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*Faculty of Social Sciences*

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### **Annex C: Consent Form**

The study has been explained to me. I understand the spoken and written information provided to me and my questions have been answered satisfactorily

☐ **Yes please tick I agree to be interviewed**

☐ **Yes please tick I agree for the interview to be audio-recorded**

I understand that I can change my mind at any stage and it will not affect me in any way.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Respondent Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print name)

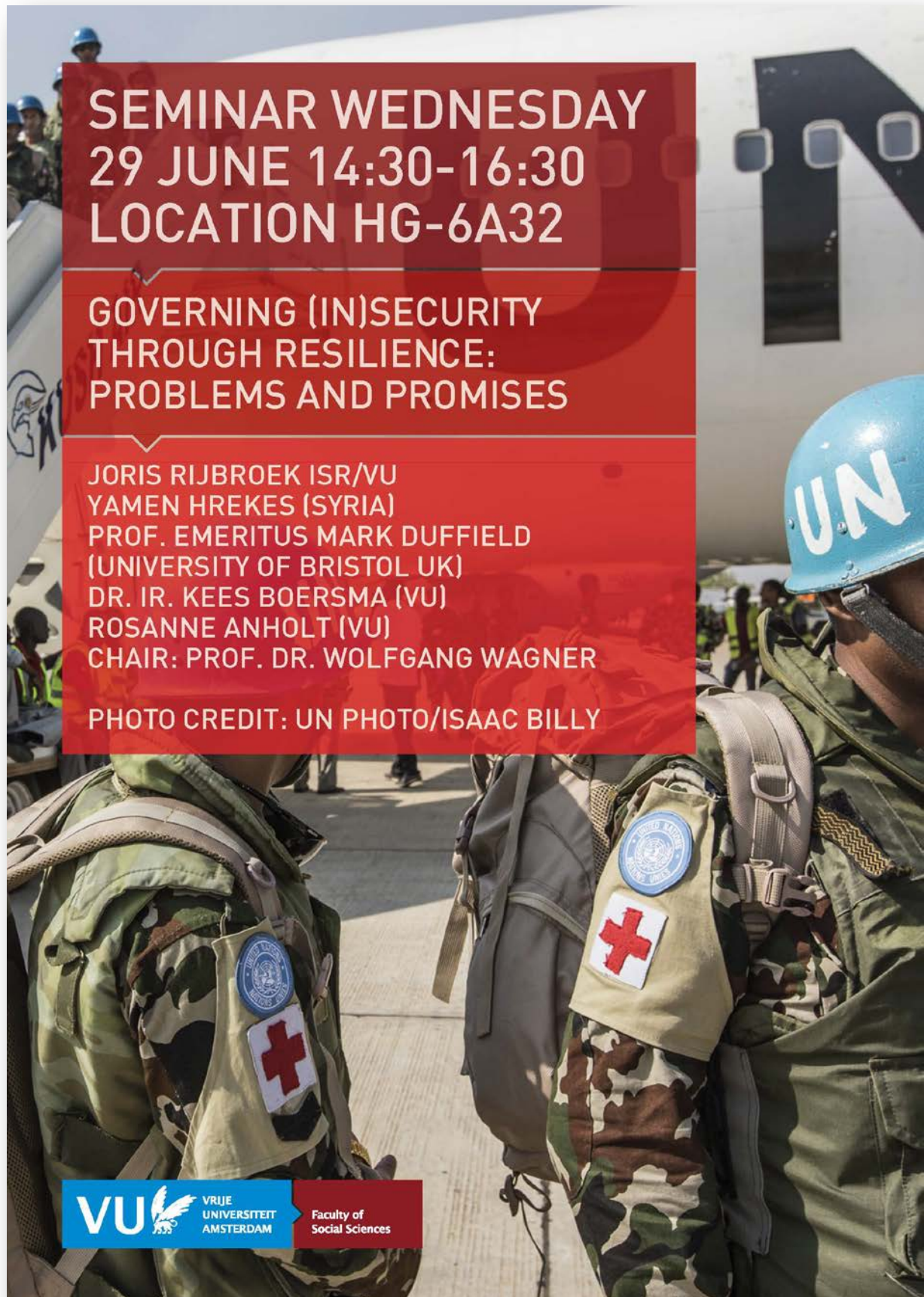
I certify that I have followed the study standard operating procedure to obtain consent from the participant. S/he apparently understood the nature and the purpose of the study and consents to the participation in the study. S/he has been given opportunity to ask questions which have been answered satisfactorily.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print name)

***THE PARTICIPANT WILL NOW BE GIVEN A SIGNED COPY TO KEEP***

Annex D: Seminar Poster



**SEMINAR WEDNESDAY**  
**29 JUNE 14:30-16:30**  
**LOCATION HG-6A32**

**GOVERNING (IN)SECURITY  
THROUGH RESILIENCE:  
PROBLEMS AND PROMISES**

JORIS RIJBROEK ISR/VU  
YAMEN HREKES (SYRIA)  
PROF. EMERITUS MARK DUFFIELD  
(UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL UK)  
DR. IR. KEES BOERSMA (VU)  
ROSANNE ANHOLT (VU)  
CHAIR: PROF. DR. WOLFGANG WAGNER

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**VU** VRIJE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
AMSTERDAM **Faculty of  
Social Sciences**



Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration  
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